This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 08244484 9

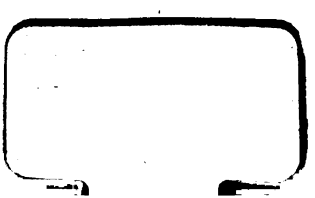
Digitized by Google

Australasia - Description and travels, 1800-50

Australasia - Description and travels, 1850-1900

Gold - Victoria

Mining - Australia



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WHAT WE DID

IN

AUSTRALIA:

WE TOOK GOLD and 1
give them CRIME sickness

BEING THE

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THREE CLERKS,

IN

THE STOCK-YARD

AND AT

THE GOLD FIELDS.

EDITED BY

G. B. EARP, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE GOLD COLONIES OF AUSTRALIA," &c. &c.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND CO.
FARRINGDON STREET.
1853.

H.C.

Digitized by Google

TO NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
1442474A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1924 L

London:
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

It may be said, perhaps, with reference to the mother country, that we no longer want emigration—that our population is by no means so superfluous as was at one time imagined—that in many districts from which emigration has taken place, the want of labour is beginning to be felt, and more emigration would only render the necessity still greater. This is perfectly true; the tables have turned, and the labourer is beginning to be worth his hire. But do the employers of labour imagine that labour will stop at home, because it is their interest that it should do so? Labour has its own interests; precisely those which actuate the employer in the disposal of his manufactures, viz., to sell itself in the dearest market, to use the phrase of the Manchester school. Does an employer imagine that any man will continue to sell him his labour for seven shillings a week, when by transferring it to Australia he can sell it at twice seven shillings a day. If he do he is mistaken. However ill it may suit the employer to part with

Digitized by Google

labour of which he has now none too much, the labourer will not consult his employer's interests in the matter, but his own only.

It has been a mistake in this country to suppose that labour was other than slightly superfluous, and especially in agricultural districts, the harvests of which would with difficulty be housed, were it not for the swarms of Irish labourers who make their periodic descent on England. The fact is that the agricultural labourer has been told by his employer that there were too many of his class, and his mind being by no means of the highest order, has believed it, in defiance of his senses, which should have showed him, that at no time was there sufficient of his class to gather in the harvest. He has simply believed his master's interest in preference to his own eyesight. What real superfluity of hands there may have been is in our huge wen of a metropolis, and in large manufacturing towns, where the abundance of labour has brought wages down to starvation point. In towns the superfluity of labour was at one time real, and still partially continues so. In the country it has been for the most part imaginary.

I will give two instances which will explain my meaning with reference both to town and country. In my avocation as Editor of the "*Australian Gazette*," I am in the habit of receiving a vast number of letters from every labouring grade in society; so much so, that there are few labour callings into the secrets of

Digitized by Google

which I am not in some measure initiated. I will take one instance which occurred to me not a week ago. A man wrote to me, stating that he was desirous to get out to Australia, but that he was bound hand and foot to his position, out of which he could not save a penny. And no wonder—the poor fellow's position was this. He was storekeeper to a large manufacturing jeweller, in which employment he had thousands daily under his charge, which thousands, from the tone of his letter, he watched with the fidelity of a bull-dog. His salary had for a long time been no more than £20 a year, or not quite eight shillings a week. He had only asked for a rise of wages once when his employer threatened to discharge him if he did so again; alleging that better men could be got for less money, though he knew the man's good qualities were worth their weight in better gold than covered his jewellery. This stopped the poor fellow's mouth; his very simplicity of heart made him believe it, but still he could not disbelieve the elysium which number after number of the "*Australian Gazette*" pointed out to him, as he read it at the Mechanic's Institute to which he belonged, in spite of his poverty. Yet that elysium the man will, in all probability, never see, because his energy has been carefully kept down, and his cleverness and fidelity only developed for his employer's interest. Talk of slavery—pshaw! even "Uncle Tom's Cabin" records instances of slaves being permitted to accumulate thousands

Digitized by Google

of dollars wherewith to purchase their own freedom.

Next, for an agricultural instance. I am acquainted with a country parson, one of the Dr. Primrose school, of whom there are but too few left. My friend is even more *au fait* at leading the road to heaven, than pointing to it, and, as a matter of course, is much better up in theology than in political economy. The squire of the parish is also one of the Burchell school, whose benevolence would either make every labourer in the parish happy, or put him in the stocks for being miserable. Well, these two truly excellent men could not make out what was the matter in the parish: the parson said he could not marry half the young men—Vicar of Wakefield fashion; and the Squire said that the labourers were not half paid, though he reduced his rents to a most unproductive rate, and every farmer in the parish grew as fat as his own home-brewed ale; they thought they had more hands than employment. It was agreed to refer the matter to my arbitration, and the case was duly laid before me.

I at once recommended the emigration of the superfluous hands, and pointed out to the Squire that it would be more profitable for him to bear the expense, than to let matters on his estate remain as they were. My advice seemed so feasible, that it was adopted, and the preparatory measures were about to be taken; but one Sunday, when a strange face was seen at church,

Digitized by Google

the said face, in fact, belonging to myself, a sort of mysterious feeling was evidently brooding over the little congregation, which certainly did not emanate from the preacher's sermon. I felt myself as being closely inspected as to the number of horns on my head, or the quantity of cloven feet which might be ensconced in my boots. After service, a meeting of the assembled wisdom of the parish was held in the churchyard; a remarkably fat churchwarden taking his place on a tombstone as chairman. I was not present, but it was afterwards told me that a resolution was passed, raising the wages of the labourers generally, and for employing, somehow or other, all that were unemployed. It was clearly to the interest of the fatted calves, that none of their feeders should emigrate. And the feeders have since stuck to their work. Australia is not, as far as I am aware, the better for one of them. The assembled wisdom in the churchyard knew better the cause of discontent than did either parson or squire. But it is evident that they have delayed the remedy too long, or have not made it strong enough. Many meetings in the churchyard will be necessary now, before even the agricultural labourer can be persuaded that it will be best for him to stay at home.

It is the population of manufacturing towns to whom this little work would especially appeal. It details the struggles of three men, whose previous lives had been passed in that most helpless and most

Digitized by Google

uninstructive of all conditions of life, a clerkship. They knew no trade, nor were they in possession of any art which could be turned to useful account. Their good sense led them to emigrate, not for the purpose of making a sudden fortune, but for the purpose of apprenticing themselves to the colonial trade of stock-farming, till they had acquired the experience requisite to commence on their own account; wisely anticipating, also, that their industry and good conduct would command credit in addition to their own small capital—thus, in fact, *creating capital out of character*, a process which, however difficult at home, is easily realized in any colony. No emigrant, be he ever so poor, if possessed of intelligence, energy, sobriety, and other qualities which contribute to success generally, needs fear but that these qualities will, in the long run, lead him to a substantial position in a colony; but only when he shall have acquired sufficient experience to enable him to become useful to himself and others.

View the question in what light we may, town labour does not meet with its own reward in England; in other words, the profits of labour are not fairly shared between the employer and the employed. Take the case of a Manchester factory, in which the employers, or cotton lords, amass enormous wealth, whilst their labourers are amongst the most wretched and miserably paid of the industrial classes. The latter gain their nine or ten shillings a week, and end

Digitized by Google

their days in destitution, or dependence on their offspring; whilst the former become princes in wealth, and end their days in the sweet savour of bequeathing their millions or half millions to their descendants. The unfairness of this will appear, if we look at the price of intellect in our own country, in which it is more highly paid than in any other country in the world. We pay our Cabinet ministers, our judges, and other high officers of state, some five or six thousand a year; but the manufacturer, who shall have elaborated his half million out of the skill and energy of his workmen, in the course of a thirty years' continuance in business, is paid at three or four times the rate of a Cabinet minister—or, rather, he appropriates to himself such a portion of profit, which should have belonged to the workman, as enables him to become thus rich at the latter's expense. This, we maintain, is most unfair. It is not intellect which is thus highly paid for, but a mere aptitude for business, as it is called; and this aptitude for business is often found to exist amongst the most unintellectual of men.

The workman has no remedy for this, but to take himself and his skill to some country where both will be better appreciated. To grumble at his condition at home is useless, and will only make matters worse. He may reason upon it as he will, but to no purpose, other than, perhaps, to make him a convert to the doctrines of Communism, the most absurd crotchet which can enter his imagination, unfitting him for steady

Digitized by Google

labour, with no return for his anxiety than that of rendering his position more intolerable.

The first inquiry of the inhabitant of a town, upon turning his attention to emigration is, "What can I do on my arrival in the colony?" The inquiry is a proper, as well as a natural one; and the more so, as the town classes, which are most desirous of emigration, are precisely those who feel that they know nothing, beyond the ability to keep a set of books—a species of knowledge which is not of the slightest use to them after leaving England, inasmuch as if there were employment for them in the colony, which is not the case, no books would be entrusted to them without previous colonial experience on their parts. All such must make up their minds that they will land without the possession of skill of any kind which will be at all appreciated. They need not, however, remain in their present position on this account.

The reason why, will be plain on a little reflection. It is next to impossible to get a skilled English hand out of his English methods and habits, which are rarely suited to colonial practice; whilst it is considered far easier to teach a man who knows nothing, and has, therefore, no unsuitable habits to correct. If two newly arrived emigrants, the one a smart, active townsman, guiltless of any craft beyond that of the counting-house desk, and the other an experienced shepherd, himself a walking cyclopædia on all matters relating to sheep, were to apply for employment to an

Digitized by Google

Australian flock-master, the chances of gaining it would be two to one in favour of the unskilled though active applicant. The employer would know, that the old-world notions of the professed shepherd would lead the servant to put his opinions before those of his master; whilst, however valuable they might be in the mother-country, they would practically be useless in a colony. The activity and tractableness consequent on knowing nothing, would give the unskilled man actually an advantage over the skilled applicant.

This will be evident, if we consider the nature of the employment. In England, a shepherd, or a herdsman, would be the more valuable to his employer in proportion as he was skilled in all the diseases to which sheep and cattle are heirs to, together with their remedies. In Australia, this knowledge would be thought lightly of, and for this reason: that there are few diseases, and these comparatively uncontrollable, whilst neither sheep nor cattle are of sufficient value to demand any serious attention to cases of individual sickness. It is much more important to be on the alert against the wild and wily enemies of the fold, than to cure a sheep of diseases. It is the same with cattle: a man who can be taught to ride at a pace and over ground which would appal an English steeple-chaser, is more valuable to his employer than one who has all the learning of a veterinary college at his fingers' ends. The active-

Digitized by Google

looking man, who has nothing to unlearn, will generally be employed at once; whilst his more professional competitor will only be employed if nothing more likely be obtainable.

There is nothing which an Australian stock-farmer more abhors than a man "*who knows too much*," since his own experience tells him that whatever may be the man's real merits at home, they are not applicable to his purpose; and may involve an attention to the *minutiæ* of a flock which will be highly detrimental to its interests in the gross. Such a man may be useful with a hundred sheep, but with thousands he is of no use whatever. It was this feeling which in the old days of convictism in New South Wales led to the anxious competition for London pickpockets as assigned servants to a flockmaster, in preference to the poacher or other agricultural rogue, whom no flockmaster would take if he could get a smart man of the former class. The days of convictism are now over, but the flockmaster's motives and principles of action remain just the same as before, the same necessity existing for their exercise.

The best way, perhaps, to impress this more fully on the denizen of one of our manufacturing towns desirous of emigrating to Australia, will be to show him what is really required, leaving him to be the judge as to his capability of performing it. The first thing is to caution him against the mania of gold-hunting—a pursuit which will no doubt abundantly enrich one

Digitized by Google

in ten; but then the chances are ten to one against his being other than one of the nine who are not so enriched; and it is hardly worth his while to sacrifice the certain eventual independence which must accompany the steady pursuit of industrial labour, in the chase after sudden wealth, which, even if attained by chance, will be less satisfactory to him in the long run.

This point is so material that it is worth enlarging on. Let us suppose our intending emigrant at the diggings, and that he is getting his ounce of gold a week; this being more than *double* the average which is obtained by the persons already there. He has, by the latest advices, to pay *six shillings* for his quartern loaf, and for everything else in proportion; bread being the standard of value of provisions in Australia as it is in England. The price of the quartern loaf in England is *sixpence*, or just *one-twelfth* of the price at the diggings. Consequently, if he gains but *ten shillings* a week in England, he ought to be gaining twelve times ten shillings, or *six pounds* a week at the Australian gold mines to do just as well, and no better, than he is doing at home. But suppose he gains at the diggings no more than the average of all who are now there; *i. e.* that he has precisely the same luck as his neighbours—viz., half an ounce of gold per week, value *thirty shillings*; it follows that he is four times *worse* off, at the Australian prices, of the necessaries of life, than he is before he sails from England.

Digitized by Google

If he be a clerk in an English counting-house, he can easily make this calculation for himself. If the said clerk get his pound a week at home, his thirty shillings a week at the Victoria mines will just represent *five shillings* a week as it can be laid out in the market of an English provincial town. Now this is not worth the risk of emigrating for; much less is it worth a preference for gold mining to the certain remuneration of a sheep or cattle run. The brilliant accounts of individual success at the diggings may dazzle him for a moment, but his own calm judgment should throw a veil over the momentary glare.

But we must go farther than this. Wherever an average is gained by a number of persons, some must be gaining more than the average, and others less. Suppose a lucky digger, like the drawer of a prize in the lottery, gain his 100 ounces a week, this, at an average of half an ounce per man per week, represents the joint earnings of 200 diggers; and where are the gains of the 199? The over-drawn accounts of the Australian newspapers never place things in this, the true light; yet they do sometimes tell us what becomes of the 199. One man dies of "destitution under a shed;" another, a magistrate, sells fruit for his living; a third keeps life and soul in him by making pies; a fourth, an extensive employer of labour formerly, is offered a place as cook by the servants who have run away from him, and are rolling in wealth. If intending emigrants ponder these matters as they really are, and not as

Digitized by Google

their own vivid imagination would paint them, they will be more likely to arrive at a rational conclusion as regards their best interests.

Turn we now to the lowest industrial occupation in Australia, viz., a hut-keeper in the bush; *i. e.*, the lowest in point of emolument, but really a high station in point of what it will certainly lead to, in the case of a man who is determined that it shall lead to something higher. It is, at any rate, a station from which many of the wealthiest flockmasters in Australia *have* risen. The last advices give the wages of a hut-keeper at 32*l.* per annum, with rations; rations in Australia meaning more than any reasonable man can eat. If he be married, he and his wife will command from 40*l.* to 45*l.* per annum, including her rations; a child or two into the bargain making no difference, except in the parents' favour, as the children grow up and become useful. But supposing the emigrant to be unmarried: out of his 32*l.* he may lay by 25*l.*, and that for the very excellent reason that in the bush he cannot spend his wages, if he be so inclined, unless in gambling, the too prevalent vice of bush servants. If he do this, of course his only prospect is to live the life of a dog, as he will certainly die the death of one; for the bush is the last place in the world where an undeserving man will meet with any sympathy.

But suppose him to save his 25*l.* At the end of a couple of years, this will be 50*l.*, and the hut-keeper will have become a shepherd, sufficiently skilled in all

Digitized by Google

the knowledge requisite for his craft. His employer, if his services are worth having, will willingly let him have a hundred sheep for his money, to run with his own flock. If he will not, others will, and with credit for more. This point once fairly established in Australia, the rest goes on after the fashion of a snowball, to which the increase of the little flock can alone be compared, till the quondam hut-keeper becomes a flock-owner himself. All this is in the power of any man who will steadily pursue the course pointed out; and, in fact, the pages to which these remarks are introductory are only an elucidation of the statements here made.

Turn we now to the nature of the employments of which we have spoken. These are such as the most unskilled person can at once undertake, and do well in a couple of weeks. The duties of a hut-keeeper at a sheep-station consist, for the most part, in staying at home while the flock is out—of distributing the rations —of cooking the food, and he need not be a Soyer to do this very satisfactorily—of cultivating a patch of garden-ground—and of taking a turn with the watchman at night, to see that the flock when folded does not become a prey to the *dingoes*, or native dogs. There is not much skill required here; the only danger is, that a cockney quill-driver should think such an occupation *beneath him*. If he do, let him keep away from Australia, for he will not better his condition there.

Let us suppose our hut-keeper to have become a

Digitized by Google

shepherd. His duties are even more easy; for in the excellent climate of the Australian bush, we cannot conceive a more delightful occupation to a man who prefers the calm solitudes of the bush to a life of town dissipation. He has to lead his flock forth in the morning, finding them fresh pastures whenever required, to keep them in safety from wild animals whilst feeding, and to bring them safely to the fold at night. His charge are subject to two diseases only, which require his attention: the first, catarrh, is beyond his or any other man's power to eradicate; the second, scab, being the only one which will give him extra trouble—and in nine cases out of ten it is the fault of his own negligence if it give him scarcely any trouble at all. Here, then, there is no skill whatever required, beyond what he will have gained in his occupation of hut-keeper.

Most townsmen will imagine that, as the ultimate purpose of the flock is their wool, it is necessary that an Australian shepherd should be skilled in the art of shearing. This is not so, the operation being performed by men whose professed business it is, and who travel over the country at the requisite period for this purpose. His only care is the health and safety of the flock.

The life of an Australian stockman, or cattle herdsman, is a different affair altogether, though here little or no previous skill is required; and that which is required is better learned by actual practice. The life

Digitized by Google

of an Australian shepherd is quite an Arcadian sort of affair—*minus* the crook, pipe, and mistress; the outward appointments of the Australian Damon more resembling those of a comfortably-disposed bear than the appointments of those which are painted by a vast number of poets from Virgil down to Shenstone; the age of pastorals having terminated at the Leasowes. At any rate it has never reached Australia, where the crook has been replaced by the short pipe—the trim *contour* by the beard of a twelvemonth's growth, and the voice of the maiden can be no more expected to be heard than that of the cuckoo.

In point of equipment the Australian stockman is much on a par with the shepherd—a little more uncouth, perhaps. His first requisite is to *learn* to ride—in contradistinction to his *having learned* in England. If he depend on the latter accomplishment, the chances are, that he will break his neck. The most accomplished huntsman at Melton would cut a sorry figure in an Australian cattle chase; whilst an English jockey or steeple-chaser would elicit nothing more than a loud *guffaw* from an accomplished Australian stockman. The art of riding in Australia consists in a well established, and faithfully kept, compact between the rider and his horse, that the horse shall look out for all dangers under foot, including chasms in the earth a dozen feet wide and of unknown depth—whilst the rider shall guard his own brains from overhanging branches of forest trees which emphatically threaten

Digitized by Google

them any given number of times in a minute; the horse, moreover, expects that his rider shall keep a keen look out for the charge — made every few minutes at branding time—of a wild and infuriated bull; but is not over-particular in this respect, as his own sagacity leads him to anticipate and avoid it.

The quiet occupant of a mercantile stool may think this description of a stockman's perils somewhat overdrawn; but I can assure him it is underdrawn, for the simple reason that no words can describe the feats of rider or horse in the bush of Australia. An Australian stockman never rides five horses at once, as is done at Astley's, to the wonder of a gaping audience; but were the most accomplished rider at Astley's to ride *one* horse as an Australian stockman does, he would astonish himself. Yet there is, after all, *no peril* about the matter; and the best proof of this, in my own mind, is—that I never heard of a serious accident befalling an Australian stockman; though I have witnessed feats which rendered me doubtful of the evidence of my own vision.

Perhaps the nearest approach to the riding of an Australian stockman is the steeple-chaser of our civilized country; but there is this difference between the two—that the brutal feat of the steeple-chaser consists in pushing his horse beyond equine capability or endurance. In the case of the Australian horse, both horse and rider are in the path of duty; both equally

Digitized by Google

delight in it; and each performs his part equally well.

I have gone to some length in this description of the feats of an Australian stockman—and with this purpose;—to impress upon those, to whom these remarks are addressed, that the less they know of horsemanship, as of many other matters, before emigrating, the better. They have nothing to unlearn; whilst the teaching, when they have arrived at their destination, will be both easy and speedy. That teaching will have necessity for its basis; but the acquisition of the art will come none the less quickly on that account. The intending emigrant, knowing nothing whatever of the requirements of colonial life, will have nothing worse to encounter than I have depicted—of this he may be certain; he has no occasion to turn stockman unless he choose; but if he be young and energetic, the probability is, that he will prefer a stockman's career to any other.

I will now devote the remainder of this chapter to other considerations.

We have before stated that the recent emigration from this country has elucidated the fact, that there exists no great superfluity of labour. In many cases, the banker and the merchant have been compelled to give better salaries to their clerks, the gourmand to his cook, and the farmer to his labourer. Yet there is still room for further emigration, benefiting not only the emigrant, but those also who remain behind. It is not

Digitized by Google

a healthy condition of society where there is a superfluity of labour, since the advantage is alone to the employer of labour, and not to the labourer—for whom the best social condition is that when there is a superfluity of employment, and this condition will be the more nearly approached, the more emigration becomes extended.

The state of the labour-market is one of the stock pieces of the political economist; but, like those for whom he writes, he takes care to look on one side only, and that is on the side of the employer. The *balance* of labour with him means, that the employer should always be able to get labour on low terms whenever he wants it; or, as a Manchester cotton-spinner would express it, the power of buying labour, amongst other things, in the cheapest market, regardless of the comfort or condition of the labourer himself. This is no balance of labour at all—but rather resembles what a mathematician calls a "compensation of errors," which gives a momentary appearance of rectitude to his equation, but is nevertheless false. An extended emigration will go far towards setting this matter to rights, by converting the superfluity of labour into future colonial material for additional employment, and consequently additional remuneration for those who remain at home.

The Manchester school, as it is termed, or what is the same thing, its representatives, have ever been the most supine as regards emigration, and frequently the

Digitized by Google

most inimical to colonization as a system. That they should be so, and yet command the confidence of a large number of persons, is a proof as to how much people in general think through the medium of others, instead of giving themselves the trouble of thinking for themselves. They even repudiate all protection but that which insures them labour at starvation prices. The cheap loaf has only been a means to the same end, and to none has that cheap loaf been half so profitable as to those who were instrumental in obtaining it. The improvement in the condition of their labourers has borne no sort of resemblance to the colossal fortunes being made by the employers. Set on foot in Manchester an extensive system of promoting emigration, with abundant means of carrying out its object, and none would so loudly cry out against free trade in labour.

The selfishness of this amongst men whose labour-extortion has rendered it necessary to have acts of Parliament to prevent them from working their labourers to death—and who openly defy those acts, because the payment of the penalty is cheaper than the profit which may be made by breaking the laws—will appear on a very little consideration. None have complained more loudly that in many articles of their manufacture the Americans have driven them out of the markets of the East, which is true enough. But the American labourer, who can thus successfully compete with starvation labour, gets his dollar a day,

Digitized by Google

whilst at Lowell a girl who has not been three months in the factory will get more than a skilled Manchester weaver; her avowed object in working being, by a few years' labour, to acquire a dowry for herself, in which she invariably succeeds. When did the daughter of a Manchester weaver acquire any other dowry for herself than that of penury, and hopeless debasement for herself and her offspring?

These remarks are not made in order to render labourers in manufacturing towns dissatisfied with their condition further than may induce them to make an attempt to better it by emigration to a country where their labour will be better appreciated. As far as this goes, the writer has no other object than to render them dissatisfied with their condition. Any man who is not getting that to which his labour fairly entitles him has as much right to be dissatisfied with his shortcomings, as his employer has to be satisfied with his overflowings, neither over-honestly nor over-wisely obtained. There is a wiser maxim than the hackneyed one of buying our labour in the cheapest market, and that is, "By liberal things shall men stand." The opposite of this is plainly evinced by all who will give themselves the trouble of observing the ultimate disposal of wealth thus graspingly acquired. How few of its possessors found families which endure! In most cases, their wealth vanishes in the succeeding generation; whilst in very many, they "heap up riches, and know not who shall gather them." This is perfectly right,

Digitized by Google

and in the ordinary ways of Providence could not be otherwise, or such society would be no place for the poor man—even to minister to.

The half-paid artizan must, however, take care that his dissatisfaction is not purposeless. No more helpless being can exist than the man who is eternally grumbling, without the power of bettering his condition. His dissatisfaction, like that of a chained animal, only serves the more to chafe himself. There are few who, if they will keep ultimate emigration in view, may not sooner or later accomplish their object; a few years' self-denial at most being all that is requisite to provide the necessary funds. The savings' bank, if steadily resorted to, is the first great *panacea* in this respect, and the avoidance of the gin-shop and the tavern the next. Both these latter are great aids to the grasping manufacturer in keeping down wages —their best friends, in fact; for no man who gives himself up to them is in any condition to demand that his hire should be worthy of his labour.

Whenever the artizan is in a condition to transport his labour to a country where it will be better appreciated, Australia, and the southern colonies generally, are the places for his future home; the first as the fountains of wealth, and the agricultural colonies as the places where much of it must eventually be spent. There is yet another reason which should go far in determining his choice of a location. Australia and New Zealand are rapidly becoming the culminating points

Digitized by Google

of the Anglo-Saxon race in the southern world; and however egotistical it may sound, no other race of the human family is worth mixing with. Certainly, with few others would an Englishman like to mingle. It is something to be amongst the founders of a new empire, such as is rising up in the southern hemisphere —to influence the destinies of the human race, when the old empires of the northern hemisphere shall live only in classic history, or have become effete like their predecessors of Greece and Rome: the slaves of a despotism which has no aim beyond its own temporary power, and of a policy which has no better result than national degradation.

With all our boasts of an "empire on which the sun never sets"—a travestie, by the bye, of an old Spanish saying, which subsequent events have made a rhodomontade as empty as may one day be our own—England has two colonies only, besides those in the Pacific, to which a man *can* emigrate. The first, Canada, is one of the most unsuitable possible in point of climate or locality; the first forbidding labour of an agricultural kind during the greater portion of the year, and the second demanding a longer time before actual location than is consumed by a voyage to Australia or New Zealand, where domiciliation and employment await the emigrant at once on arrival.* The second emigration colony, if it can be so called, is

* *Vide* my book on New Zealand, where this matter is fully discussed.

Digitized by Google

South Africa; the chief gains of the colonists, for the most part Dutchmen, arising from the disputes they can foment between the natives and the authorities, in the hope of profiting by the expenditure of the commissariat, of which England has had but too lamentable proof in the expenditure of many millions for no earthly purpose than that of enabling the Cape colonists to take advantage of the English determination to preserve the integrity of the empire at any cost. Beyond these two colonies, we have, notwithstanding the vastness of our colonial empire, no other location but the Australian and New Zealand colonies worthy of a moment's consideration to the intending emigrant. Canada, on the first decadence of the English power —and that may not be far distant—will naturally fall into the United States of America, if the Union last so long; and South Africa is scarcely worth consideration as a colonial dependency upon any terms, either in point of produce or political advantages.

Intending emigrants should well weigh these matters. In point of actual distance from England, Canada would seem to present an advantage; in point of getting really to work, it has not the advantages of Australia; the difference of time in favour of the latter being preponderant, whilst that difference of time is more in favour of the ship-broker than of the emigrant. As for the new settlements of South Africa, they can be characterized as little less than deliberate frauds committed on English ignorance, though with Govern-

Digitized by Google

ment sanction: not one of their pretensions being realized, or ever likely to become so.

But these remarks are somewhat extraneous matters in the present instance, though incentives to thought; so let us at once to our purpose.

The following little work will be found not only a stimulant but a guide to such as have made up their minds to cast their bread upon Australian waters. It is certainly one of the best which has yet been given to the public as a picture of bush life in Australia;—possessing all the rough energy which such a life imparts to most who embrace it, and giving within a small compass all that an intending emigrant can comprehend of bush life without actually experiencing it. It is, in short, a "guide to independence by writers who have attained it."

Works of this class are far more valuable, in point of utility, than others of greater pretension, as being unpremeditated; or even, as in the present case, being written without the remotest idea as to publication. The history of the following volume is somewhat curious. It is the production of three distinct writers, all from the same locality at home, all sailing in company, and uniting their efforts and fortunes on arrival in the colony. These three persons were neither more nor less than office clerks, possessed of no knowledge whatever beyond that of the desk—all dissatisfied with their prospects—and all determined to emigrate together, believing themselves bound by such bonds

Digitized by Google

of mutual friendship as would enable them to work together, if possible; which bonds would, at the same time, inspire them with mutual confidence and energy. Their letters home were, of course, separately sent to their several friends, and from thence the following narrative has been compiled; necessarily in the first person, as though it had emanated from one writer only. Very little literary correction was necessary, the narrative having not in any way been altered.

The narrative is, in fact, a record of the pursuit of independence under difficulties, viz., those of previous ignorance of colonial pursuits. But it is at the same time a guarantee that this ignorance, necessary with many who are equally desirous of emigrating, need not deter any one from following the example of the writers; this self-dependence being the only condition upon which each can succeed. Even with persons who believe themselves skilled before leaving England, there can be no safer rule than to cast much of their previous knowledge aside together with their prejudices, both being frequently alike an obstacle to success, and to learn afresh. The lesson is an easy one, the rough independence under which the requisite knowledge is acquired is of the most delightful and exhilarating nature, and the result is certain, provided the rule be steadily followed out.

But, as has been before enjoined, we may go further than this, and assert that previously acquired knowledge of any particular craft pursued in the colonies, if

Digitized by Google

it have become so firmly rooted as to be inflexible, is highly detrimental to success. A skilful English carpenter, who will not or cannot fall into the rough-and-ready methods of colonial building, will soon part company with his employer in favour of a much ruder artizan, who has no prejudices, and is willing to learn what is really wanted. In the same way, a first-rate English shepherd, who would persist in nursing individual sheep afflicted with some slight ailments, whilst the *dingoes* were making havoc with the rest of the flock, would in the end be more destructive to the interests of that flock than the wild dogs themselves. A sharp eye is of infinitely more consequence than leechcraft, and vigilant habits than any degree of professional skill. A man who can ride down a bullock is more highly esteemed than one who can cure th diseases of the animals.

Many are deterred from emigrating, from a consciousness that they possess no knowledge of any craft that can be turned to useful account. That is, they judge themselves by an English rather than a colonial standard. If they knew the nature of the latter, which is rather tractability than English knowledge, they would not hesitate for a moment, provided they were alone, and had no family dependent on their exertions, whilst they were attaining skill. Though even in this respect, Australia presents a highly favourable aspect, for in place of requiring a man to pay for the skill which is being imparted, colonists are

Digitized by Google

very willing to pay him, and well too, whilst he is learning.

These are most important considerations to many a would-be emigrant, though the perusal of this book will show him that his fears are altogether groundless. To impress this further on him, is the only object of these additional remarks, and none whom they may influence need hesitate to act upon the advice which they comprise.

G. B. EARP.

"*Australian Gazette*" *Office*, *March* 19, 1853.

Digitized by Google

WHAT WE DID IN AUSTRALIA,

&c. &c.

At a time when all the various inhabitants of Old England are regarding with longing, yet somewhat doubting eyes, the wondrous accounts of golden rocks and sands which reward the toils of their Australian brethren; when thousands only delay their departure to the "promised land" from uncertainties as to the best mode of transit—the best preparations for their long and tedious journey—and, perhaps, a few natural fears as to what may be expected on arrival at the port of their destination;—a few words of advice, a trifling narration of adventure undergone and wonders observed, may not be deemed altogether out of place; even though pamphlets, cheap hand-books, and a thousand journals have already done much in making the English public familiar with the leading fea-

Digitized by Google

tures in the now every-day-matters relating to emigration.

As I would gladly think that what I write may be useful to the many whose minds are turned towards the Australian Colonies, it may not, perhaps, be amiss to reverse the usual order of things, and give the conclusions arrived at even before the grounds on which those conclusions are based; and, first, as to who should emigrate, or, more strictly speaking, *who should not;* the first class would be "legion" indeed; the latter are happily but few.

From a brief consideration of what is wanted, no one, unless blinded by an immoderate self-love, can fail to be assured whether it be worth his while to leave this country. First in the list of qualifications, then, stands perseverance, a sturdy John Bull feeling of determination, not to be shaken by a short illness or a run of ill-luck, but to plod forward, secure of Dame Fortune's smiles, if there be but courage enough to stand against the first rough buffet, which, perchance, may meet the novice in the strange land in which he has cast his lot. Of scarcely second importance is it, that drink do not hold its ruinous, soul-debasing influence over the intending emigrant; if, indeed, he be addicted to the vice, farewell all hopes of rising in his new sphere; all that is gained is as quickly spent, and a miserable death soon ends as miserable a life; liquor of all sorts is so easily obtainable, and in the colonies at so slight a cost, compared with England, that thou-

Digitized by Google

sands are wrecked on this quicksand; or, to use poor Tom Hood's simile, the rock they split upon is *quarts*. Drink is the great bane of the colonies in question, and, alas! that it should be so; the Anglo-Saxon and Milesian seem to be but too well fitted by some thirsty particle in the composition of their clay, to avail themselves of the fatal opportunities thus afforded them of at one stroke destroying themselves and their families. Do not think this picture too highly coloured; but turn to any work or paper which gives a statistical account of the Australian Colonies, and there mark the quantity of spirits consumed in proportion to the population; mark further, the proportion which taverns, public-houses, grog-shops, and the like, bear to the numbers of other tradesmen's shops in the various towns. The result may then be guessed at. Heaven forbid that I should decry the use of spirits in moderation; but better, far better, forswear the use than fall into the abuse which may be daily, aye, hourly witnessed in town, country, and bush, in Australia.

If a man be sober, persevering, and blessed with tolerable health, he *must* succeed. Australia is a land for one and all, where both head and hand are sure of a reward for their exertion; but in Australia, as in England and everywhere else, the reckless, the improvident, the sluggard, and the drunkard cannot, do not, and will not prosper.

Whoever my readers may be, men of towns and

Digitized by Google

cities, or dwellers in the villages of our native land, I say to all, ploughmen and weavers, mechanics and shepherds, clerks from behind your desks of ill-paid toil and drudgery, or starving honesty wandering in the streets, if you know yourselves to be sober, persevering, and honest, come to Australia, and you will prosper; a thousand chances are there for all; labour, be it of head or hand, is valuable and well paid for; none but vagabonds starve—none are unhappy but those who deserve to be so. Understand well what is recommended, and ask your hearts in honesty and sincerity of purpose if you are what I have said, if, undaunted, you can work hard, and fare hard, perhaps, for a short time for a certain reward; if you cannot answer these matters satisfactorily to your own consciences, in the name of all that's good stop at home, for you will be worse here than you are there.

Many, very many, are there who, after having thrown up good situations in one of the towns, have started to the "diggings," have become disgusted with the fatigue and hardships incidental to the rough travelling in the bush and over mountain roads; and after a few days' trial of digging, with scarcely patience to dig deep enough to reach the stratum in which the gold is most plentifully found, have started back again with curses loud and deep, because, through unaccustomed labour, their hands were sore, or because they could not find a ten or twenty ounce nugget immediately they broke ground; and, again, because they

Digitized by Google

did not like damper, or tea, sugar and *sugar bag* all boiled together. These are the men who grumble and do *not* succeed, and would wish other men to fancy that the fault lies, not in their folly, but in the country.

There are hardships, doubtless, trying to the constitution, trying to the mind, trying to the temper, but how is it at home? Have you not quite as great in England? Is it not better to have plenty in Australia as a shepherd, a herdsman, a farmer, a grazier, or a gold digger, even though that plenty be rough in its cookery, and with no better sauce than a healthy appetite? Do you not in England work as hard as the body can be driven, either with head, hand, or both, for just enough to keep body and soul together? If you do, is it not easier to exert that labour where, in a short time, it will render you happy and affluent, in a land where marriage adds to a man's wealth, and each child that is born to him is likewise an addition not only to his happiness but to his affluence? But, to gain this, you must work sturdily and soberly.

Thus much for qualities required to prosper in the Australian colonies—qualities, truly, which, more or less, are likely to succeed anywhere, but which there have a wider field for adventure, and a certainty which cannot be felt in the crowded cities and towns, the unceasing grinding competition, and increasing numbers of England. All of you, then, who in England feel that you are endowed with a moderate share of

Digitized by Google

the qualities named should start, and *at once;* but if, on pondering on the step, you feel doubts and hesitation, pause, and examine your hearts well and closely to know whether those doubts arise from the natural dread which hangs over one about to embark in a new sphere of life, or whether they arise from a consciousness of not coming near the mark I have pointed out. If the latter, stop at home. If you feel yourselves to be easily turned from a purpose, or fond of your ease, or fond of the bottle, stop at home. Stop at home, ruined men about town. Stop at home, "gents," whose ambition is to be great at the "Casino," the "Cider-cellars," or the betting-houses. Stop at home all you who cannot do without hot water for shaving, and finger-napkins, and Soyer's sauces at dinner. But to all who *can* work and *will* work, whatever or whoever they may be, I say, "Come; for it is a great and glorious land! Come, and happiness, plenty, and content await you here."

Early in 1847, a desire to escape from the thraldom of a London office induced three of us to emigrate. Having but few hopes in England, and no connexions to delay our departure, or induce us to alter our plans, we sailed for Adelaide as steerage-passengers, both as a measure of economy and to habituate us in some degree to the hardships we had little doubt we should have to undergo; and many a worse introduction we might have had—that is to say, bearing in mind the purpose for which we sought such an introduction.

Digitized by Google

The good ship was tolerably full, and, as all were land-folk, of course all were soon very sick; each had to shift for himself, and make the best of matters as they occurred. But this passed off as we became habituated to the motion of the vessel: still there were many things to annoy and make matters uncomfortable; so many persons thrown together in a narrow and confined space could scarcely agree, and constant quarrelling went on; then, the discipline of the ship, which was necessarily strictly enforced, bore hard upon the steerage-passengers, and curses, deep not loud, were frequently showered on the poor skipper's head, though I believe he did but his duty. I can, however, easily imagine that, with a domineering or brutal master, the steerage of a vessel would be verily a place of torment for those whose ill-fate conducted them there.

I will not speak of the details of our voyage: we had gales and calms; hatches battened down at one time, whilst thunder, lightning, rain, and the heavy fall of water on deck as a wave would pop its head over, filled those below with feelings not easily imagined or described; at another time we had a bout of gasping in a dead calm beneath a sun like a ball of fire immediately above our heads—but that, like our other trials, did not last long. We crossed the line, and I believe some fun, as Jack would call it, was contemplated, but that the emigrants had heard of the kind of jokes perpetrated and did not seem to admire the idea; the good old skipper interposed his autho-

Digitized by Google

rity, and all passed off quietly. All these mishaps, we were assured, were but the ordinary course of a mariner's life, and, believing it true, whether it was or was not, many a sincere vow was registered that one voyage in a life-time was enough, and that nothing should induce the grumblers to venture on another trip over the billowy sea.

We arrived safely, and with light hearts, and not very heavy pockets, entered Adelaide to "seek our fortunes." Totally unused to labour, it may be believed a not very cheering prospect was before us; but the feeling which prompted our departure from England upheld us here, and it was with a full determination to succeed that we landed on the Australian shore.

We had been strongly advised by certain friends in England to make up our minds as soon as possible after arrival as to our future proceedings, and then at once to leave the town, where lodging and living were extremely dear. A cabinet council was soon called; we were now to decide what was to be done and to do it.

As to turning farmers or graziers, that was out of the question—we knew nothing about it, and we doubted, for the first time, perhaps, what we *were* fit for. It was resolved, *nem. con.*, however, that we should wait on certain gentlemen to whom we had received letters of introduction and frankly ask their advice. We did so, and the answers were as frankly given:—"You have too little money among you all to do any-

Digitized by Google

thing on speculation: your best plan is to put the little you have in a bank, where, by-the-bye, you will receive a high rate of interest, put your pride in your pockets, and start into the bush; get yourselves employed as shepherds, stockmen, or anything of the sort which will give you an insight into the mode of keeping and raising sheep and cattle. You will receive good wages, all of which you may save, and in a short time you may commence operations for yourselves with confidence and an almost certainty of success." We were told in the course of conversation that we might certainly, if we chose, obtain situations about the towns, but they would not be so materially better than those we had relinquished in England as to compensate for the expense and inconvenience we had undergone, and even then we should have no prospect of aught beyond remaining in slavery all our lives—to avoid which we had voluntarily expatriated ourselves.

Although we had sought for advice with a firm resolve to act upon it, yet it was with feelings of mingled hues and shades that we commenced talking over among ourselves the various accounts we had heard and advice received in our round of visits. Even though resolved, it was not a very easily-managed thing to at once pocket the false pride usually felt by those not born to manual labour; and I verily believe, almost the greatest trial we have undergone was that first one of "beginning the world at the beginning."

Digitized by Google

Having fixed upon our mode of procedure, we disposed of certain portions of our outfit which we found of but little use to us; the other portions which we did not immediately require we left in the care of some of our good friends in the city; and with a knapsack of a few necessary things slung at our backs, and a thick sapling in the hand of each, we left Adelaide *nine* days after landing from the ship.

In laying down our plans, it had been proposed, if possible, that we should hire on the same run or farm, as our choice might fall; but, at all events, that it would be better to separate than that two of us should hire for the same purpose;—our aim being to learn, one would be sufficient to each branch; afterwards, when we should commence for ourselves, we could in turn instruct each other in those points of which individually we stood in need: on this view of our business is to be found one of the great causes of our ultimate success.

We trudged merrily along the road, which, near the town, was sufficiently like Old England to recal a thousand scenes and memories; and as a cottage here, or a garden there, was passed, one or other of us would discover a fancied resemblance to a home scene, and many a hope was expressed of some day again revisiting the spots which were so vividly recalled. After a few miles, however, the aspect of the surrounding objects, though still, being far from wild or uncultivated, sufficiently impressed upon us the fact that

Digitized by Google

we were in a strange land, with strange trees, shrubs, birds, and insects, everything strange, and "passing strange." The road was dusty in the extreme, and increased the toil of walking in an exceeding degree; —eyes, throat, and nostrils alike suffering from the impalpable earth which every breath of wind, every footstep as we passed on, raised in clouds; whilst our garments were like Joseph's garment—of various colours, from the same cause. After several minor halts, in order to procure a cup of water to wash a little of the fine clay from our throats so that room might be left for respiration, we finally brought up for the night at a small "shebeen" on the road, the which, though but a short day's march from the metropolis of the province, was scarcely equal to the small ale-houses of our own country villages; and here we were first introduced to the staple articles of food throughout the Australian colonies—mutton-steaks, damper, and tea. The damper is nothing more than flour and water kneaded together and made into small flat cakes; sometimes with a little salt mixed, and then baked on the hearth or a griddle-plate, as the house happens to possess one. The tea is equally rudely made; a quantity of tea is put in a pot with sugar; water is poured in, and the whole is then boiled together. When sugar is scarce in the bush, the matting of which the sugar-bags are made is also popped into the tea-pot, to extract the saccharine matter; so that, to a stranger, the infusion has rather a strange

Digitized by Google

taste: it requires some time to become used to the peculiar taste of the damper bread, but hunger and use soon overcome trifling discomforts like these, and, in fact, on this, our first trial, I believe we made a very sufficient meal off the viands I have mentioned.

After our appetites were sated, we lighted our pipes (by the way, another general habit in the colonies—pipes are universally used, and a meerschaum is invaluable), and, in company with our host, prepared for an evening's chat. After having poured forth for the information of our host and his family everything we could call to mind of English news, we commenced inquiries respecting our chances of success in the life we had marked out for ourselves, and, sooth to say, no answers could have tallied better with our wishes than those we received; it came out that our host had been induced to emigrate to Sydney, and for some short time had been employed, together with his wife and children, on a farm not far from that city; but feeling desirous of getting farther into the bush, he had changed, and changed again, until, in about seven years, he had been nearly over the three chief colonies; and finally, with the money he had saved, they had bought a small plot of land from the person who owned it. He then run up a small house, and all turned to cultivating their little nook of ground, adding a trifle to their means of living by entertaining wayfarers—though the income derived from the latter source could not be great, I suspect; for, except a hearty

Digitized by Google

shake of the hand to father and sons, not an idea of recompense or reward would they entertain or hear of.

We slept there that night, and receiving directions as to our route and conduct, we started forth on our onward career. According to the advice we had received we struck off from the road we had been following, and proceeded in a more easterly direction in order to arrive at a station which we were informed was some considerable distance on, having been moreover assured that we should be meeting with settlers' huts, but where we should be heartily welcomed by the inmates. The road or pathway along which we were now passing was of a most wretched description, often, indeed, difficult to trace: the only foliage was that of the straggling bushes around, and here and there a huge ungainly gum tree, standing like a skeleton giant in our way. Here we met an adventure which had nearly deprived us of one of our party.

Whilst plodding forward, now watching the strangely ornamented birds which were flitting about, or talking over our plans, one of my companions, observing at the side of his path a thick piece of stick, struck at it as he walked by; judge of his surprise as the fancied stick reared itself with an angry hiss and threatening eye; before it could spring, however, he struck it down, but without killing it; in another moment, however, the three saplings descended upon

Digitized by Google

and destroyed it; even in dying, however, the reptile snapped at and fixed its fangs in the stick I held; finding it dead I allowed it to remain clinging to the stick, and carried it on with me to the end of our day's journey. Before this we had not given one thought to the possibility of meeting any poisonous reptiles, but our fright made us sufficiently careful, and a wide berth was given to anything which looked suspicious, either in our path or by the side of it. On halting for the evening at a small hut, in which resided as wild an Irishman as ever breathed in or out of the Emerald Isle, we were assured that the reptiles were both highly venomous and often met with, yet that they were little to be feared, being indolent and timid; in point of fact, the greatest danger arose from their indolence exposing them to be trodden on, when they were likely to spring at the offender. Still, but few cases were known of persons being bitten, though when such an accident did unfortunately take place, the wound was always mortal.

One evening here was spent much as the former, but our Irish friend walked next day a considerable distance with us, and before leaving us, pointed out our way, and then bade us God-speed. There is no use in repeating the details of our journey up the country; such things you may see in every book or paper about these colonies, so I will even skip on to our arrival at the "run."

We arrived early one forenoon at the spot, and found

Digitized by Google

some ten or twelve huts together, with a large railed-in space, like a village-pound. A score of noisy dogs instantly raised an alarm, and a couple of heads popped out of one of the huts to see what was the cause of the disturbance. A warm welcome was at once accorded to us, all hands were absent except the hut-keeper, and one of the men who had sprained his shoulder by a fall from a horse, a day or two before.

Although we were welcome enough, it seemed that the dogs did not by any means admire the introduction of "Chance" into their domains. By-the-bye, I have not yet introduced him, and as he has done me good service, it would be a gross injustice not to draw his portrait.

I became acquainted with him in Adelaide, where he was being unmercifully mauled by sundry street-curs, in consequence I suppose of his being a total stranger; perhaps also, because they were a little jealous of the ornament he had round his neck, neither more or less than a piece of chain attached to a boat's rullock; from which I fancied him to be some ship dog left in a boat as a guard, who, getting hungry or restless, managed to get loose and was next lost. Be that as it may, my sympathies were aroused, and by the vigorous use of a stick I had in my hand, I succeeded in driving the bullies off and leaving my friend in peace: much to my surprise, he immediately attached himself to me and followed close to my heels,

Digitized by Google

every look of his eyes, every wag of his tail, saying "I mean to stick to you." I was well-laughed at on getting back with my acquisition, but *malgré tout*, I formerly adopted him and christened him "Chance"; and a good chance I have ever considered it that I found him.

He is rather a yellow tinge, strong as a young tiger, and equally determined and fierce. His gripe is like that of a vice, and I have never yet known him turn tail at anything; and now that the dogs in and round the hut were clamorously entering their protest at the addition to their number, Chance stood by my side, head a little down, tail up and teeth displayed quite "ready" as the hut-keeper declared. A few well-applied lashes with a heavy whip quickly restored peace, and seating ourselves, we were speedily engaged in taking off the rough edge of our appetites, which had been considerably sharpened by a walk of five to six hours that morning.

In conversation we mentioned our desire of taking service, myself as a labourer, little H—— as a shepherd, and M——, finding it would be difficult to get employed on a farm as first desired, determined also to engage as a Jack-of-all-trades, if possible—herdsman, hut-keeper, and gardener. We laughed heartily at his resolve, but he persevered in it, and carried it out. After several days' delay in making arrangements, &c., it was finally arranged that M—— and myself should join the party with whom we were stopping, to

Digitized by Google

receive 28*l.* per annum each, with a weekly allowance of 10 lbs. meat, 10 lbs. flour, 2 lbs. sugar, ¼ lb. tea, 2 oz. of tobacco, each. Meantime, H—— had entered into an agreement to serve as a shepherd in the neighbourhood (about twenty or twenty-five miles distant), but he receives 30*l.* per annum, rations being the same. On entering service we frankly told our employer we knew nothing of cattle or sheep, and were told in reply, so much the better; in answer to our statement, that we could ride but little, we were told with a laugh we should soon learn. As there were a large number of cattle, we had a considerable number of hands employed, two being always left at home to keep all safe. W—— and myself, therefore, arranged that we should go out alternately, so that each should have a fair share of work, experience, and amusement. Horses were allotted to each, but no saddle was to be had until the next supplies came up the country. However, a shift was made, and the next day I made my *debut*. Attaching myself to one of the men, with whom I was more pleased than the others, we started off at daylight at a stretching gallop, which sorely tried my nerves, and I soon found from the gay laugh that was the only reply I could obtain to my prayer for a halt, that initiation into the mysteries of riding had commenced. Throughout that day we were almost constantly in motion round the herds, keeping them together and in good pasturage, care being taken to avoid driving them more than was absolutely neces-

Digitized by Google

sary. Every now and then some wild youngster of the herd would throw up his head and tail, and away went we, helter-skelter, after him—he must be headed and driven back; but still take care. Ah! I thought so; down goes his head, and with a vicious bellow he charges the bold man who dares to bar his path; a touch on the rein, and the well-trained steed swerves aside, whilst the heavy-thonged whip descends with a crack like a pistol on Bullee's side or head. A second time he is headed, and now he turns back to the herd, a lash across the flank making him bellow and bound forward as nimbly as he before had rushed the other way. In one of these episodes, the excitement of which well nigh made me forget the martyrdom I was suffering, the beast which had separated from the herd suddenly turned at right-angles in its course, and charged at me like a thunderbolt. He was a fine bull, nearly all black, and as, with flashing eyes, and foam on his lip, and broad chest, he dashed at me, he looked a noble animal. I did not think so at the moment, however, for, swerving my horse on one side, he started somewhat abruptly, and I went flying over his head,—another moment and I should have been in the air or beneath the bull's feet, when, like a shot, one of the men went over me at a stride, and as his whip descended with the full swing of his arm, I saw the brute wince and turn away. One second more and I was again in the saddle; whilst laugh, jest, and quip ran round at my tumble.

Digitized by Google

On gaining our huts in the evening, we found our meal ready for us—beef and mutton-chops and steaks fried—damper and tea, and could I have found any position in which I could have partaken of my meal with ease, I should have been happy. But, alas, no! neither sitting, standing, squatting, lying, nor kneeling was practicable long; I tried each, but my bones ached, and sore, sore was my flesh after that day's ride. My mistakes and mishaps afforded the themes for that night's gossip over our tea and pipes, and merrily and happily did the hours fly by, until it was time for "snoozing." A watch was stationed and the dogs fastened round, as the dingoes, or wild dogs, destroy great numbers of the young calves, and will even enter the enclosure in which they are penned, in spite even of the dams, dogs, or watchmen. Although roused several times by the clamorous barking of the dogs, yet the night passed off without any disaster, and the next morning, after preparing breakfast, the parties started, leaving myself and the hut-man at home.

I had resolved to make my horse as much my friend as possible; and in order to teach him to know me and obey my voice, I had tethered, or rather picketed him, about twenty yards from the front of the hut, and as I passed about, kept speaking to him and occasionally giving him something to eat. He was half wild, and did not at all like my approaching him, making use of his heels occasionally in a way which rendered it a matter of consideration how to get within reach, which,

Digitized by Google

however, I now and then did, smoothing and caressing him.

Whilst thus employed, towards mid-day my companion suddenly made a dart towards the stock-yard, with the ejaculation of "By Jove! there's a dingoe," and sure enough, a moment afterwards away bowled the gentleman, heading for some bush about a mile distant. "Ho! Chance, ho! after him, my boy!" One second sufficed to tear the picket from the ground; I forgot my stiffness, my pain, my aches, driving my heels against my good steed's sides; away we went as for dear life, the dingoe making for the bush as hard as he could tear along, Chance at his heels like grim death, myself in the rear, bare-headed and without saddle, bridle, spurs, or whip. "Ho! Chance, ho! a hundred yards more and he is your own, brave dog, hie on! hie on!"

The next moment my horse stretched out to clear a small chasm which I had not noticed, so intent was I on the dingoe; and barely keeping my seat as he rose, I verily thought I was in pieces when he landed. But never mind; "Rush forward! On! Chance, on! pull him down, brave dog." The dingoe turns; now for the tug of war; not so—the cowardly brute lies down on its back, and Chance panting, stands over it, gazing with astonishment and contempt. I sprang down to lash it up; but as the dog turned to lick my hand, Master Dingoe thought he would make off. Vain hope, he had scarcely run

Digitized by Google

a yard before the dog was upon him, one nip across the loins, a cry, and an angry growl, and the robber was defunct, while Chance, bounding and gamboling round, claimed thanks from me by his noisy cries. I patted and caressed him, then seizing the dead animal, leaped on to my horse, and galloped back to the huts. Oh! that glorious run; many a tearing gallop have I had since then, but that short five minutes, with boiling blood, on my horse's bare neck, made me a horseman. Strange, too, from that time my horse, which a moment before had lashed out at me with his heels, seemed to recognize me, whinnied as I gave him food or caressed him, and however distant, a whistle or a word, if it but caught his ear, brought him at full speed to my side.

Thus passed our days in wild gallops after wild cattle, or wilder dingoes; sometimes a kangaroo showed itself, and then I am afraid the cattle were for the time forgotten, as at headlong speed we endeavoured to ride it down. Sometimes with a gun, of which several of us could boast possession, we would add gaudily clothed parrots, blue birds, and other winged inhabitants of the bush, to our rarely varied meals. Sometimes an opossum (not much relished) or a kangaroo appeared on our table, and at night the wild tale, the merry song, or the riddle, would beguile the long hours.

Among the things we had left behind in Adelaide, were a number of books and magazines, and on join-

Digitized by Google

ing we had sent word down so that they might come up with the next waggon-load of provisions, &c. These I read aloud as long as they lasted, and many a long and serious argument took place from the facts or fictions which thus were brought under the notice of my companions. When we had read all these and discussed them thoroughly, it struck me that, instead of reading them aloud again as had been purposed, W—— and myself could find in our memories a goodly stock of novels, of which, if we could carry on the story in a consecutive manner, we could at least find materials for many a long evening. My proposal was hailed with acclamations, and through the long evenings of nearly three years which we spent there, most of the novels of Scott, James, Maryat, Bulwer, Cooper, and others, were retailed for their amusement, whilst neighbouring shepherds and drivers have ridden ten and twelve miles to spend a few hours, listen to the story, afterwards wending back their weary way cheerfully and contented.

About three months after we joined, we had a cattle-branding, which I will describe as a specimen of some scores at which I have subsequently assisted. Our cattle, being most of them old hands, did not require driving home like newly bought ones, which for some time after changing masters require constant care and watchfulness to prevent them starting off for their old run. In consequence of being less closely watched, ours, though all near at hand,

Digitized by Google

were somewhat wild, and we knew we should have a job in getting them together. All hands from the stations and runs around were therefore called upon for their assistance, which is always cheerfully rendered, as each master in turn requires the same accommodation. On the appointed morning then we mustered twenty-seven hands, all good men and true, and mounting, we dashed off, describing a large circle in order to bring all our herds in at once. After several hours the various lots were seen tending towards the common centre, the stock-yard.

This said yard, I should inform you, is a species of pound, constructed of course with reference to your requirements, with gear for slaughtering, branding, &c. We had two, at some distance apart, and dividing the herd, a portion was headed toward each. Now commenced the tug of war—no force, no persuasion would induce many of them to pass the gates; they seemed to anticipate what was to follow; the refractory would one moment dash off at full speed hoping to escape, charging everything that came in their way. Frustrated in that, one would dodge into the other parcel of cattle, and commence his pranks afresh there, whilst not a few of them, after several trials, lay down on the ground, and nothing but severe lashing would make the cunning brutes rise. At last they were all enclosed. Near the gates sat two of the older stockmen with the description-books, entering the written portraits of all the youngsters we had

Digitized by Google

to mark. The branding-irons are of various sorts. Some owners are content with initials, others have a fancy for crosses, stars, &c., and some make use of most unintelligible hieroglyphics, and for no better reason than that the brand should not be imitated. Little good if it were, for such marks are always obscure, and the master or brander himself could seldom swear to his stock. The branding-irons are attached to a long handle to avoid injury to the operator's hands, and when heated to redness are applied to the flank or sometimes the shoulder; the latter is, however, in my opinion a dangerous plan. The cattle are lassoed and thrown down if full grown, or manifesting anything like a tartar spirit, but the calves are merely hauled close to the stockading and then marked whilst standing. This job lasted us for some hours amidst shouts and laughter; one moment an unruly beast resisting all efforts to catch the head in the noosed rope, or when caught and branded, making every one near fly from his frantic rage, the scampering men rolling over the rails in their haste to escape. What with blunders and narrow escapes from accident, peals of laughter, the hoarse bellowing of the caged cattle, and the shouts of those standing around volunteering advice and help, which served to render the "confusion worse confounded," such a scene can be but faintly described; to be appreciated it should be seen.

After the branding had been completed, a jovial

Digitized by Google

feast was prepared for all hands. Beef and mutton—salt and fresh, roast and boiled—were placed upon the planks which did duty for table, accompanied by vegetables from our garden, damper, and tea in large pots; and, after the inward man had been satisfied, tobacco in plenty. Fresh tea was brewed, pipes were lighted and relighted, and songs, and stories, and jests went round until it was time to break up.

Occasionally this monotonous yet stirring life was varied by a visit to the neighbouring stations, or by a small party at home, and thus were passed two years of our time, when we considered we were sufficiently versed in cattle and sheep breeding to start boldly on our own account; but the old herdman, or overseer, strongly advised us rather to enter into some agreement with the gentleman on whose run we were employed, so that we might occupy a portion of it with cattle we might purchase, either by payment of a small rent or by acting as assistants in return for the accommodation we received. Deeming this advice too good to be rejected, M—— was despatched next day to make all necessary arrangements. A second good hint had been given us by our old friend, that a bill was as good, or nearly so, as hard cash when the endorser was known. M—— was told to bear this in mind, and, as may be supposed, sage were the councils and advices he that night received; though little H—— somewhat marred

Digitized by Google

the solemnity of the parting exhortation by advising M—— to cut off a few feet of his hair and a few inches of his moustaches. There was a great deal of truth in the observation, for barbers are scarce in the bush, and none of us had either time or inclination to care much about his toilet. A profusion of hair, whiskers, beard, and moustache, was therefore to be seen on each face, only trimmed sufficiently close with a pair of scissors or shears as not to interfere with the functions of eating or drinking; altogether, our wild appearance would have enabled us to pass either as Robinson Crusoe or one of "*La Jeune France*," and we often laughed to fancy the looks of astonishment and dismay which would greet our appearance at the west-end of London, whilst many were the expressions of doubt and wonder as to whether our best friends would recognize our browned and hair-covered visages.

It was decided to send M—— down in consequence of the money at Adelaide having been paid in to his ame; and as we fancy he is also the coolest head of the party, it was doubly our object for him to go. He started off the next morning, and only those who have undergone the trial, can appreciate the feelings of anxiety and suspense to which we were the victims, until his return about a fortnight afterwards. We knew well he would waste but little time when he reached Adelaide in settling matters, but a thousand chances worried our minds after he had fairly set out:

Digitized by Google

he might lose his way; might be thrown from his horse; be taken ill; and what could he do then, or we either? Such was the state of our minds for some time; and the only way I could find to relieve myself was by violent and continuous action. I was in the saddle the whole day, skirting the run at full speed on the look-out for stray cattle, and in the excitement of the rapid motion, and the care required to avoid holes and the trunks of fallen trees, I in some degree lost my feelings of anxiety for my absent friend.

One morning, however, whilst about a mile from our hut, I heard my name vociferated by H——, who the next moment came at a full run towards me without hat or coat, his hair flying loose and looking like a wild man. "Hurrah! he's back, and he's all right, and has not been ill; and, what is more, he looks respectable, for he has not an atom of hair on his face now." I could not refrain from laughing, though my spurs were in my steed's side in a second as I made him spring forward towards the huts. It was a merry meeting; for nearly three years we had been constantly together, and use being second nature, we missed each other wofully, though but separated for a few days.

It occupied us but a short time to spread our rude table; and, after he had satisfied his hunger, we lighted our pipes, albeit early in the day, and squatted down to hear his report. He had arrived at Adelaide

Digitized by Google

safely enough, and at once proceeded to the residence of one of the gentlemen to whom we had been indebted for the advice which had determined our mode of procedure upon our first arrival. He had already been amused to see the people stare at him, accustomed as they were to see the graziers, &c., come down from the bush, but on inquiring of the servant for Mr. ——, he burst fairly into a laugh at the woman's look of amazement, and his merriment was not lessened by the surprise of the worthy gentleman and his family, who entirely failed to recollect him. On making himself known, however, he was most warmly welcomed, and every assistance tendered him to carry forward the views with which he had come down. Taking the precaution in the first place, however, to divest his face of the greater part of its hirsute covering, he proceeded with our kind friend to see Mr. —— (the owner of the run at which we were), and on making known to him our views and wishes, he was met with the utmost cordiality and kindness. A short time sufficed to arrange matters, and it was agreed that we might have 200 head of cattle at 2*l.* 5*s.* per head, and the use of the run for six months, it being understood that we assisted in the tending his herds as well as our own; the payment to be made by two bills, the half at six months, and the second half at twelve months after date. At the same time he offered to let us have 500 head at the same rate, or even at

Digitized by Google

an extended credit if thought fit. This, however, did not suit our views, and M—— therefore declined it. The fact is, that a man may here always obtain good credit if he be known to be sober and industrious, and if, as in our case, he be known to possess a few hundreds in either of the banks, he may obtain credit to *at least* double the amount, and on most advantageous terms.

This agreement having been made, M—— drew out a couple of bills, which having duly executed, he handed over to the seller, receiving in return an order to the overseer to deliver two hundred head of selected cattle to be allowed to remain upon the run for the space of six calendar months from that date; and so behold us fairly launched into the Australian world as cattle holders on our own account. The next three days were employed by M—— in attending at various places where he thought it likely he might meet with fine cattle, in which at length he proved successful, purchasing two splendid young bulls, colonial bred from a Durham sire, for thirteen pounds paid down; these he had brought up with him, not deeming it worth while either to run the risk, or go to the expense of hiring a man for the purpose, and as he had no further occasion to remain, he started next day with his purchase, first entering into arrangements with persons in the town to send down such cattle, &c., as we might desire to dispose of, to them for sale, as they could best manage. Such was the substance

Digitized by Google

of our crony's tale. After thanking and praising him, and admiring the two splendid brutes he had brought up with so much trouble, we sat ourselves down with joy and pride in our hearts that we had at length thrown off the yoke of servitude, which, lightly as it sat upon our necks, still forcibly on occasions recalled itself to our minds; still were we thankful that we had persevered in our determination, for now with knowledge and increased capital, we started in a fair race, equal to any of our competitors and with nothing to fear; strong and energetic in our union, the weakness of one counterbalanced by the strength of another, like the old fable of the bundle of sticks. We felt that united we were a match for, and superior to, all opposition or trials, and that proving true to ourselves a straight road of success and happiness lay open to us, and we firmly resolved, "*coute qui coute*," that success *should* be attained.

The next question was the selection of our cattle; and as the branding gathering, &c.; would soon take place, we resolved to wait until that time, and select our animals as they were driven in. M—— had ordered a set of brands to be made and transmitted by the drags which were to arrive previous to our branding the young yearlings, so that we should be thus all prepared at the proper time; our brand was a circle with our three initials.

A second source of care still remained, and that was the selection of a run for our cattle by the time

Digitized by Google

our tenancy expired, as we were well aware we could scarcely expect to remain after that time even at a money rent, as at particular seasons the pasturage was but little more than a bare sufficiency for the owner's herds. It was a subject of long consideration and debate among us, especially as we well knew there was nothing for sixty or seventy miles round which would suit us, and it was absolutely necessary that one or other of us should personally view the grounds about, before we took up the run. As the presence of all three was not required at the branding it was finally resolved that I should be the travelling member of the firm, and should start at once in quest of eligible ground and water for our beasts, and that in the event of finding such a place, I should at once proceed to make sure of it.

We had bargained with Mr. —— for the purchase of the horses we had been in the habit of riding, obtaining the three for the sum of thirty-six pounds; so seeing that my old companion was in good trim for a journey, I resolved to start next morning with old "Chance" and his son "Beauty"—this latter was, if possible, uglier than his father; still he was staunch as steel and a favourite with us all. My instructions were to find, if possible, a run with a good constant supply of water, either by pools or stream, as near as possible to the roads and to the towns, and as little infested with "scrub" or dense underwood as might be; of course trees were wanted for shade, if they could be

Digitized by Google

met with. All these points were to be fully considered, and as good an average attained as the land I should fall in with would allow.

The next day I accordingly took my departure, and as it was quite possible I might have to camp out, I took good care to carry with me a small store of salt meat and damper, as well as good store of ammunition —being armed to the teeth in case of a rencontre with a strong native or bushranger, either of whom is inclined to be civil to a man with a loaded piece in his hand. Knowing that it was of no use attempting to procure land to the westward, I started off in an easterly direction, intending to cross the Murray on its upper stream, and then seek through the country down towards the coast, trusting much to be able to obtain information of anything worth having at the shepherds' huts in the course of my journey; circumstances which happened induced me, however, slightly to change my route, and well was my search rewarded by such a change.

As I had expected, I found that I should have to make myself as happy and comfortable as I could in the open air for the night, and continued forward in the approaching gloom merely to look out for a comfortable-looking spot. This I was not long in finding; when, unsaddling my horse and picketing him where he was sheltered and had plenty of good herbage, I set to work lighting a large fire under the lee of some thick scrub, which sheltered me from the

Digitized by Google

draught of the night-air which was gently sighing around. A little tin pot soon procured me some tea, and making a hearty meal, I lighted my pipe and was soon lost in deep reveries; at one time recalling dear old England and the friends I had left there, and then running over the events of my life here.

From these thoughts I was recalled by the fierce barking of the two dogs, who, springing from their cosy berth close to the embers of the burning wood, were now dashing about the edge of the bush threatening some one or some thing within. Thinking some of the natives might be trying to come upon me unawares, I rapidly cocked and levelled my piece at a spot where the rustling of branches and leaves plainly pointed out the presence of a living object, singing out that I "should fire if no one made his appearance."

"Call off these confounded dogs, then," exclaimed a rough voice, and bringing them to my side by a whistle, the thick underwood was pushed aside by a couple of rough looking men, whom I at once set down as escaped prisoners. As I, however, did not wish actually to *know* this to be a fact, I stopped the elder man of the two, who was about to explain matters, and telling him that I never had been a curious man, I proffered them a share in what remained of my salt meat and damper, which was accepted and demolished with an alacrity that spoke volumes for the hunger they must have been enduring.

Digitized by Google

Giving them some tobacco they were speedily in the seventh heaven of happiness. I soon learned from the odds and ends of their converse that they must have scrambled through forest and scrub, over mountain and waste and barren sands, for nearly five hundred miles (even allowing they had progressed in a straight line), for they mentioned having crossed the Liverpool range and the course of the Macquarie. They intended, they said, to get employed near Adelaide until an opportunity offered to return to England, *as they were quite tired of this country.*"

Learning the object for which I was wandering about, they advised me to keep to nearly a due easterly course, if anything, slightly tending to the southward, towards the track between Sydney and Melbourne, assuring me I should meet good pasture-land and water, though in many places heavily timbered. After chatting some time, one of them heaped fresh wood on the fire, and we then dispersed ourselves to sleep—a sign first calling old "Chance" to my side, where he lay all night. Before day-break, however, my strange acquaintances were afoot, and warmly thanking me and bidding me God-speed, departed in a direction to cross the Murray and towards Adelaide.

I felt very doubtful as to proceeding as they had advised me, inasmuch as the distance was so great; but if the land were such as they described, and near the Melbourne road, the advantages would have more than counterbalanced the inconveniences. Reasoning

Digitized by Google

thus, I determined at once to strike off in the direction indicated, making all speed to satisfy myself of the truth or falsity of their representations. My journey lay through a low, bushy country, with clumps of gaunt gum-trees scattered here and there. I had to pass several ravines and gullies, and in one place I crossed the bed of what, in the rains, would be a considerable stream, running into the Murray, but now a succession of small pools. The banks had a most beautiful appearance,—a thick belt of shrubs, intermingled with a species of ivy, whose small, dark, shining leaves formed a beautiful contrast with the other colours of the surrounding foliage. I had hard work, however, to get through, as this same ivy bound up the whole of the shrubs into one tangled mass; and, in ascending the bank, I had fairly to cut a way through.

The same country, covered with low bushes, clumps of wretched-looking trees, and here and there a slight eminence of stones, lay before me as far as I could see. It was at once apparent that it was of no use driving my horse so hard, for that "camp out" must be the order of the day (or rather night) again. The dogs had been snapping at kangaroo-rats at frequent intervals, so that I had no fear as to their being in good condition; but it struck me, if I should again have a couple of visitors at my night's bivouac, I should be running short of my next day's fare. However, no such event happened, and by my solitary fire I sat

Digitized by Google

smoking and sleeping through the long night, till, as the faint gleams of morning shot along the horizon, I blew up the fire, and fortifying myself for my onward journey, I mounted, and again travelled forward.

My progress, from the nature of the country, had necessarily been comparatively slow, so that after pushing on until after mid-day, I began to imagine I must have deviated considerably from my line of march, as before this I had calculated on striking the Murrumbidgee; it was nearly evening, however, before I came upon the bank, and glad was I to see the waters shining in front of me, as I pushed through the tangled undergrowth of shrubs along the course of the stream. At the spot where I struck it, there was a tolerable body of water, the stream forming a kind of sheltered reach, which in the times of drought is, I doubt not, one of the large ponds or lakes which are the only indications of the course of an Australian river at such periods. Not feeling disposed to hunt along the bank for a narrower spot, especially as evening was rapidly drawing on, and I was almost certain to meet with some station or other near at hand, I spurred my horse in, and half wading, half swimming, we passed over: the cool, refreshing feel of the water relieving me of some part of the fatigue which I felt. I speedily perceived indications of man's presence, both on the opposite bank, and in the country itself; and after riding about a

Digitized by Google

mile forward, the welcome sight of a large sheep-fold and hut gave me assurance of a comfortable meal. The dogs speedily catching sight of me, commenced their noisy salute, to which "Chance" and "Beauty" as promptly replied. Riding up to the door, I was at once welcomed by the two inmates; and, first paying due attention to my horse, I entered, and was soon lost in the agreeable duty of demolishing mutton-steaks, and damper, and tea, all steaming hot. Sitting round the fire afterwards, I learned that the advice I had received from the two runaways was true in all its bearings, the land about being good for pasturage, with a sufficiency of water, and in many places good cover of trees scattered here and there.

Their hut was one of the out-stations of the run, and they had been there for about five weeks, but expected to be shortly relieved, though they did not seem to dislike their lonely life. They had been, they said, very fortunate in not having lost a single sheep during the time they had been there, though on frequent occasions the dingoes had been close to the spot, the dogs alone preventing their attacking the flocks. If I wanted a good run, they advised me to locate in some part of the space between the Murrumbidgee and Murray, a very great portion being good plains, intersected by creeks and pools. Towards the northern, or rather north-east portion, the ground was broken, and heavily wooded, though good pasture was to be obtained; the vicinity of the hills, as a general

Digitized by Google

thing, affording a certainty of water in the small ravines and pools.

Chatting over these and similar matters, the time passed on, until the one whose turn it was to watch, took possession of a kind of box lying outside, dozing in which, with all the dogs on the alert for dingoe or stranger, he passed away the night. His companion and myself still sat smoking and talking of home, till fatigue admonished us to wrap ourselves up and lie down to sleep.

Next day, I again started onward, receiving directions as to how the stations lay, and also which were the unlocated spots. I was, however, spared much trouble, travel, and anxiety, by meeting, two days afterwards, at one of the large squatting stations, the sheep-owner who had taken the whole of the immense run upon which I had been travelling. Knowing the errand upon which I had come down, he offered me the use of his land (provided his own immediate flocks and herds were not interfered with), at the rate of twopence per head per annum. This proposition I at once closed with, it being agreed that our cattle were to be considered as equally free with his own stock to traverse any part of the run. I thus obtained the use and advantages of an immense space of land for the same sum that we should have paid for a very small one.

The next three or four days I employed in riding over the country, in various directions; and pleased as

Digitized by Google

I had been at first, I was even more so after a closer examination had shown me the capabilities and extent of the pasturage around. In consequence I suppose of the creeks and rivers keeping the country tolerably moist (I am speaking of Australia), the herbage was much closer than I have before seen it, the prevailing character of the grass which had hitherto come under my observation, having been somewhat scant, so that the ground was plainly visible between the blades; here, however, it was much closer, and in spots formed clumps as close as our meadow swards in England. The apple-trees (so called) were scattered in small clumps; and some other trees, whose name I do not know, were also sparely scattered over the landscape, the green of the leaves looking doubly beautiful in my eyes, from the contrast with the wretched gum trees with the stripes of bark depending around them, which I had hitherto been in the habit of seeing around me. It was then, and still is, a matter of some surprise to me, that no farming has yet been carried on in this locality, for I feel sure the land would amply repay the labour and expense; and when the country is more densely populated, it will become one of the granaries of the whole continent: its great disadvantage at present is, of course, its distance from either of the capitals; but as the stream of population flows upwards, the roads will become good, and the produce of this part of the country find a ready market and sale.

Digitized by Google

After having thus made my arrangements, I thought it high time to start for home, as I well knew M—— and H—— would be anxiously expecting to hear as to my success, or otherwise; and as we were in first-rate travelling trim, I resolved to push on as fast as possible, which, knowing the road, I could now safely do.

I turned my face towards home at once, starting in the early morning; and as at a stretching gallop (our usual pace here) we flew over the ground, I felt that with health and all the prospect of success in life, I had done a wise thing in leaving England, and trusting to the rough, primitive life of the bush for greater comfort and happiness than I had a chance of possessing before.

Onward I pressed, taking the precaution, however, of learning from one of the men on the run, where I could pass the river without dashing in as I had done on my arrival; and passing over comfortably, I urged my course still on, as fast as I could go with due regard to my steed's legs. My homeward path was quiet and peaceable enough, the only things I saw being an occasional kangaroo, whose head would be popped up to reconnoitre me, and then, astonished rather than alarmed at the sight of myself and dogs, a bound would carry him yards forward, perhaps to stop and gaze again. I could have shot several, but they were of no use to me, situated as I was, and the dogs could generally snap the small species called

Digitized by Google

kangaroo-rats, in sufficient quantities to appease their appetites; the larger ones thus escaped unscathed—more than they would have done had a station been within half a dozen miles of the place where I saw them.

Throughout the whole course of my route, I had been careful to notice all the peculiarities of the way, and also the quality and quantity of the herbage, as I calculated on bringing our cattle the same way I had come, being, with but trifling variation, a straight line. My great trouble was, that for nearly seventy to eighty miles before reaching the Murrumbidgee, there was scarcely any water except in a few pools, which would not supply one-half our stock: wherever I saw any indication of water, therefore, I dashed off to examine the spots, and thus, though I found many small water-ponds, I could plainly see that a portion at least would have to keep to the southward of my course in order to procure the necessary supply of the precious fluid; the rest could pass along the direct route, and meet the remainder on the other side of the river. This, however, would double the length of that portion of the journey, for that part of the stock which would keep to the southward; and an addition of seventy miles in a country where there is much scrub, is alike harassing to the stock and its drivers.

I reached our old place late on the eighth day since I left the spot I had fixed on for our run, for I had been obliged to be careful of pushing my horse

Digitized by Google

too hard, as he had become a good deal distressed by my frequent excursions into the brush after water. My arrival was hailed, as may be believed, with loud acclamations of pleasure; and scarcely could I obtain time to eat, so many and so eager were the questions asked. At length, having satisfied myself, I proceeded to satisfy them, and had the pleasure of finding all my measures approved, not only by my colleagues, but also by the old and experienced hands around. In return I was told that it had been held advisable to increase our stock, as three of us could easily manage treble the number we possessed. My consent being, of course, immediately given, the purchase of 240 head, which had been already selected, was at once concluded by M——, making our total number 440 beasts.

As none of us felt much inclined to be hutkeeper, we concluded an agreement with one of the men on the run, whose time was up, to accompany us in that capacity, receiving 25*l.* per annum and his rations. This being settled, the question arose as to taking the animals down to our station; and, after many *pros* and *cons*, we resolved that M—— and the hutkeeper should keep to the course of the stream, where they were sure to find water, with 300 head; whilst H—— and myself should push forward with the remainder, and commence proceedings in our new location; and as the herbage was now in good condition, we resolved to start off as soon as possible, notwithstanding

Digitized by Google

the loss of the grazing for the six months, as previously agreed on between M—— and our old master and friend, Mr. ——.

Some time was necessarily lost in making various arrangements, and also in determining which were to be the beasts to go along the upper route, the strongest, of course, being selected for that purpose, as it was most probable that they would be somewhat distressed by the time we struck the Murrumbidgee. Having determined on the division of our forces, as I have told you, we got the cattle together; and all of them having now received our branding marks and been entered in our stock book, we separated them into two herds, and prepared to start, confident that, bred as they had been on the same run, they would not stray far unless the whole body went adrift, and that would cause us little trouble, a large body being easily traced.

On the next morning we started, bidding adieu, with regret, to the companions with whom we had so long been associated; nearly two years and a quarter having now elapsed since we first made our appearance there fresh from Adelaide. However, we were not the first who had left the place, starting in the world; and with bright prospects before us, we drove off the slight gloom ever attached to a parting scene. H—— and myself were the ones starting now, it being considered advisable to drive off our lot clear before the others passed, so that M—— and the

Digitized by Google

man did not leave till next day. Our progress was uninteresting enough—slowly passing through the country I have already described, seldom exceeding a walk, and camping at night near one of the water-pools for the benefit of our charge, one always on the alert with the dogs, and his arms ready to be used at a moment's notice—he towards dawn rousing up his companion in order to obtain a snooze before starting. Such for nine days was our life: sometimes, provokingly enough, the animals would scarcely move along at all, and ten or twelve miles was a good day's work under such circumstances. The last three days, however, we were compelled to press them forward, as I was well aware they would otherwise get no water; and, rambling at night, probably would be lost; or, being tired out, become a prey to the dingoes. The last day I began almost to despair, for the greater part of them were nearly done up with a long day's march and but a scanty supply of water the previous days; our horses, too, showed signs of flagging. It would not do, however, to give up; and we still kept pressing the poor brutes as much as we dared. On a sudden they voluntarily quickened their pace, evidently conscious that there was a stream ahead, and though still at a considerable distance, they carried on their increased speed until the long wished-for element was at hand. A task of no ordinary difficulty now presented itself: the bank was steep, and covered with tangled bushes and underwood; and as the water was

Digitized by Google

in plenty below, we feared lest any of the animals falling should be lost. Riding between the bank and the herd, we contrived, by the aid of our good dogs and the lavish use of heavy-thonged whips, to direct the course towards a part of the stream where the bank was low and sandy, though the brushwood was quite as thick, perhaps even more so, than above. Cutting a way through for the leading members of our bovine family, those who followed speedily widened the passage, and their noses were soon buried in the welcome fluid. As we had resolved not to pass over till the next day, we headed back the herd; and making such rough arrangements as we could contrive to prevent their straying to the stream and crossing, we prepared to pass the night; the whole of the animals, to our great delight, making play upon the scattered herbage and shrubbery, evidently none the worse for their journey or involuntary abstinence during the past three days.

Our anxiety, however, speedily made itself apparent by our frequent and suspicious glances through the gloom, to make sure the herd was not straying; and as we both came to the conclusion that sleep was out of the question, we brought our horses nearer to us, ready for the saddle, should occasion require; a blazing fire was made up, tea prepared to last the night, and our pipes replenished as well. I wish we had an Australian poet, who could sing, in Byronic strains, the praise of tobacco, and lend the charms of verse to place the

Digitized by Google

herb in the position of lofty pre-eminence it deserves. What should we be here without it? What could supply its place? No matter to the shepherd or stockman, to the traveller or squatter, if meat, damper, or even tea, run short; but to be on short allowance, or destitute, of tobacco would be privation—misery indeed! No loss could press so heavily, nothing could be more severely felt, than such a calamity. To look at a hut in which an Australian smoking-party is assembled, the startled spectator would fancy the hut was on fire; but no such thing. Let him enter the small crib, and a dozen red sparks will be visible, the glowing bowls of as many pipes, whose owners were thus seeking solace after their day of unremitting toil.

In England, I fancied myself a smoker—vanity, and delusion, and vexation of spirit! I was only learning, for there I puffed out a few cigars; here a short black pipe and strong tobacco is the style of thing, almost literally from morning till night, and from night to morning round again. Throughout that long night, then, H—— and myself sat by our fire, smoking, chatting, and drinking tea till morning. If by chance our heads drooped with drowsiness, a feeling of apprehension immediately caused us to spring up, and, involuntarily laying the hand on our guns, look carefully and suspiciously around in quest of our charge. In point of fact, the novelty of our position, and the constant state of care and anxiety in which we had

Digitized by Google

been during the past fortnight, had its invariable effect upon the mind; so that, even when the body demanded repose, the nobler part, impressed with the calls which had been made upon it, resolutely refused to cast off its suspicious vigilance, but, on the alert itself, compelled the body, albeit with a bad grace, to follow its example.

Thus passed the night; and in the morning, we had the mortification to find our numbers eight short, our two young bulls among the missing. A close search was at once instituted along the banks; and after a considerable time, we discovered that they had not crossed, but had travelled away along the bank towards the northward. Leaving H—— with the rest of the herd, and all the dogs except my own two, who were close at my horse's heels, I pushed as fast as I could through the bush, following the track of the fugitives, which was plainly enough to be seen. I was, however, nearly two hours before I caught sight of them, strolling along leisurely, browsing on the scattered grass and tender sprouts of the shrubs. Making a slight *detour*, I turned them; and as I was resolved to cross, and get some distance on that day, I pressed them along their trail, only succeeding in again joining H—— towards noon-day.

In no very amiable mood, we proceeded to drive our animals across; and a pretty job we had. Some preferred to go up and some wanted to go down stream; some were seized with an intense desire of examining

Digitized by Google

the banks, and shrubs on the banks; whilst others, again, lay down in the shallow water, calmly disregarding all our shouts, and even our whips, expostulating, with loud-mouthed bellowings, at our half-frantic efforts to get them up and across; noisy barkings were added to the uproar, as the dogs, running here, swimming there, endeavoured to aid us; whilst an unruly member of the herd, pawing the ground, head down and tail up, was only in doubt whether to charge the dogs or the men. His doubts were speedily dispelled; for my whip, descending upon his side, raised doubts in his mind as to the kind of country on the other side, and he at once plunged into the stream so as to solve the difficulty.

At last, imagine us all safe across, and now upon our own ground, though the spot I had marked out in my mind's eye for our station was forty or forty-five miles distant. Near the river, however, it was necessary we should remain, until joined by M—— and the remainder of the stock; when I proposed to leave them, and start forward, to get the necessary buildings, &c., erected by the time they had recruited their animals, and travelled slowly down to the place.

Our great fear was that, though, during the day, by "tailing" our animals, we could keep them all safe, yet at night it was very possible they might head back; we therefore proceeded some little distance on in order to arrive at the station I before mentioned as stopping at when I first came down; as I trusted, by the aid of the

Digitized by Google

shepherds, to knock up a rude inclosure, for the purpose of keeping them together at night, during the time we remained. Upon arriving, however, we found that they and their flock had left; but as the remains of the fold they had used was still standing, we contrived, by the aid of some saplings and bush-vines, to make the place tolerably secure, though a restless beast could have easily leaped the pale, if it felt disposed.

Feeling more at ease now that the chances of loss were so marvellously diminished, I proposed to H—— to leave him for three days, calculating that one day's hard riding would take me down, another bring me back, leaving the intermediate one to rest my horse, and enable me to make some arrangements. He agreeing, I left him all the dogs, and started at once, reaching the spot I was bound for in good time the same day.

On making known my wants, I was told that there were in the neighbourhood some *tame blacks*, who could run up a couple of bark huts, weather tight, and quite large enough for our purpose, in three or four days; and that a messenger should be sent off at once to a creek at some distance, where a large party of sawyers were located, to bring up a couple or three to set to work at our stockyard.

Sure enough, the next morning brought blacks and whites; the latter, as you may imagine, were the first attended to, as we should not have minded sleeping in the open air, provided we felt assured of the safety

Digitized by Google

and well-being of our stock. After a long consultation, it was agreed that the sawyers were to provide materials for and erect a stock-yard, eleven yards by six, three railed, with a partition across (making in effect two yards each, five and half by six rods), of strong stringy bark, fitted with all the gear necessary; viz. gallows, milking-ranges, &c., the total sum to be paid being 7*l*. They were then to run us up a large hut, and a small one; the former divided so as to serve for a storehouse as well, for which we were to pay a further sum of £16. The work was to be commenced immediately, and be subject to the approval of any one of us, and be paid for on completion by cheque. The "blackies" we left in the hands of the overseer of the neighbouring flocks, who saw our huts run up, and paid the natives in various goods, the total value of which was under a couple of pounds.

Having thus started them at work on the part of the run I contemplated making use of, I started back to relieve H—— from his troublesome and lonely duty. He was glad enough at my arrival; for, single-handed, he had been harassed severely in bringing up the herd, and counting them into the yard.

According to our calculations, we might every day expect to see M—— and the remainder of the cattle; and consequently we contrived, as much as possible, to keep our herd grazing along the banks, or within a reasonable distance of the stream. It was

Digitized by Google

not until the twenty-third day, however, that we perceived their approach, their journey having thus taken thirty-two days; and the state of anxiety in which we were from day to day may well be imagined. All kinds of gloomy ideas had taken alternate possession of our minds; and several times we had seriously debated whether it would not be advisable to drive our herd up to the station, hire a man to take charge, and then, with some of the blacks, who are noted for their sagacity in the pathless bush, start in quest of our missing friends. But now all was right; they were in sight; and hastily driving our lot into the yard, leaving Chance fastened to the old hut, and the other dogs loose about, we dashed off to assist in the passage. It was a joyous meeting; and in answer to our inquiries, we learned that, although both were well, and the cattle safe, yet a weary march had been traversed since we had parted. We had little difficulty in bringing them across; and, as our immediate charge was little likely to stray now, we released them, and incarcerated about two hundred of the wilder animals just arrived.

After all our arrangements had been made, and tea despatched, we requested a narrative from M—— of his disasters. It appeared they had left the next day as agreed on, and found the route tolerably clear and open, affording pasturage sufficient for the animals, as also water. After having progressed in this manner for four days, their course was stopped by a marshy

Digitized by Google

piece of land, which they endeavoured to pass round, but, owing to the dense growth of underwood, found impossible; two days were lost in vain attempts, and, at length, not liking to retrace their steps, they resolved upon crossing the stream. With difficulty and an immensity of trouble they succeeded, but fate was against them, and twice again they crossed and recrossed the course of the river, ere they were enabled to keep steadily forward to the point indicated for our meeting.

They had had no flour for above a fortnight, and for some days had been destitute of tea and tobacco, subsisting on kangaroos, several of which they had knocked over, and preserved the skins; on one or two occasions the man succeeded in obtaining some fish. They did not look any the worse for their privations, as we laughingly assured them; still we could feel for them, knowing the discomforts of such a case.

They were eager to push on, however, and the cattle being in good condition, and quite equal to it, it was voted, *nem. con.*, that I should ride on to see all ready, and they should follow with their charge. I was always selected for these pioneer jobs: they all seemed to look upon me as a kind of wandering Jew; and certainly I never was more happy than in the saddle, and on the move.

Off again, then: on reaching what in future was to be home, I found all finished—and well finished; the overseer had seen all done, riding over every day to

Digitized by Google

see how matters were going on, and, certainly, taking as much interest in it as though the affair had been his own.

On my first arrival, no one was about the place, but two of the blacks, who had been directed to watch for us, and report our arrival. These same blacks are queer looking fellows, straight and tall, with *rather* intelligent features, certainly much more so than my reading had induced me to conceive; they have considerable corporations of their own, and all are willing to do their best to increase them, being very fond of eating, especially of flour, tea, sugar, and tobacco; a small piece of the latter, held up as an inducement to do some trifling task, almost invariably carrying the point. They are very good-tempered too, and obliging, feeling a degree of pride in any trust placed in them, and very seldom abusing it. They are useful too from their skill in tracking footsteps; seldom failing to track and recover any stray cattle or sheep; they are very clever at removing bark from trees, their climbing powers aiding them most wonderfully. I have often seen one of these tall fellows with the whole weight of his body resting on the point of his big toe, which was placed in a small notch he had cut with his tomahawk in the tree. They are capital fishermen too, and if well treated, I fully believe are equal to a white man as a shepherd in the bush. There is no doubt that they are very rude and uncivilized in manners and habits of life; but the stories that are related of their being

Digitized by Google

little better than the veriest brute beasts, are all trash and falsehood. In the towns where they are degraded by drink, and other causes, these tales may have some truth, but in the bush I emphatically and again repeat that it is false.

My black companions soon had a glorious fire for me, and making some damper and tea, I set to work, giving them a portion, much to their delight. As soon as they had finished, they prepared to start off to the overseer's to let him know of my arrival, giving me to understand, in their broken English, that they should run all the way, and should not stop until they returned with the person they were going to.

Seated in front of the fire, quietly smoking, I passed away nearly three hours, when, at full speed, arrived some seven or eight of the men, employed at our neighbour's sheep station, bringing meat, tea, and tobacco, evidently intent on making me comfortable, and themselves happy, and a merry evening indeed we passed.

Strange was the company thus gathered together; the overseer had been an old soldier, who, years ago, had come into the country; three of the others had been in the British naval service, two were emancipists, and I myself a City clerk. How different our positions now! the old man was contented, and did not wish to leave the snug berth in which he was; but all the others were looking forward to becoming stock or land holders on a greater or less scale. One

Digitized by Google

of the sailors who had been a midshipman, being now on the run with the same view as had induced our trio to commence our career as cattle drivers.

When down here before, I had concluded an arrangement by which Mr. F——'s drays were to bring up the supplies we should stand in need of, and I now anxiously inquired whether the orders I had sent down to Melbourne had been executed and arrived.

"Oh! yes," was the reply, "Mr. —— has heard your party so highly spoken of by friends of his in Adelaide, that he has added several articles, which he thought you stood in need of, subject, of course, to your own and friends' approval."

On further inquiry, it appeared that our old master was acquainted with Mr. ——, and that it was through him that we had been so well spoken of. But the best friends must part, and leaving the two natives, the whole started back for their own huts at a late hour.

The next day was occupied in getting over our somewhat incongruous and multitudinous assemblage of stores—tea, tobacco, sugar, gunpowder, lead, flour, salt, soap, nails, and other articles of ironmongery, three saddles, and gear appertaining. Mr. —— had added to the list of articles which I had ordered, some good rope, several axes of different sorts and sizes, two tarpaulins, and the same number of churns, and a stock of stationery, which had escaped my memory entirely. All these, with the aid of my blacks, I got

Digitized by Google

safely housed in the back part of our board house; and at night, as I listened to their animated chatter, as they sat on the opposite side of the fire, smoking the tobacco I had given them, and caressing my two dogs, who lay contentedly by them, I made a silent but firm resolution, that I would try whether kindness could not make them more settled in their habits, their restless, roving dispositions being the only barrier, in the opinion of those who know them well, to their becoming good and useful members of society. This barrier is, however, a very—very great one; yet I feel assured, that though I was not enabled to carry out my views, had time but permitted, I could have overcome it, and conquered the only remaining trait of savage life, which I could perceive in these harmless aborigines.

Next day my friends arrived with the cattle; and highly commended was I for all my arrangements, and for the spot I had selected for our settlement, the which commendations I received in a proper spirit of humility, laughingly reminding them of the "Wandering Jew," a cognomen which they had thought fit to fix upon me. Our friend, the overseer, came over in the latter part of the day, and though he had considered the price we had paid for our stock as rather high, he acknowledged, on seeing them, that we had made a good purchase, every head having been picked with care from the vast herds of our late station. The young Durham bulls attracted his attention, how-

Digitized by Google

ever, greatly; he praised them much, and said that, if care were taken always to use such sires in breeding, the Australian cattle would soon surpass any in the world. I do not know about *surpassing*; but with the care, which in England is bestowed upon the breeds, I am certain we could *equal* the best the old country ever has or could produce.

We sent off one of our blacks to the sawyer's camp to bring up the men to whom we were indebted. At the overseer's suggestions (or rather commands) they had made, in my absence, sundry alterations, and, I confess, improvements, enhancing the cost of our various buildings. M—— drew a cheque for 29*l.* for the sawyers, and another for Mr. —— for the goods brought up by the drays and also supplied to the natives, for 73*l.*, our stock of goods being a tolerably large one. We three then taking possession of the smaller hut—the large one being entirely a store—the hutkeeper was put in possession of the stronger of the two bark ones, whilst our blackies and dogs, too, seemed tacitly to lay violent hands (and feet) upon the other.

Our stock-yard was very strong, and large enough for treble our present extent of business; but in directing its build, I had had in view the certainty of every year increasing the number of head to be looked after; and as the calving season was close at hand, a speedy increase might be looked for. As all our present work was, however, an outlay of hard cash, we set to work,

Digitized by Google

as soon as we were settled, to square our accounts and find out how we stood.

When M—— was in Adelaide, our bank account, including the wages we had received, and interest on all the amounts from the dates they had been paid in, amounted to the gross sum of 1,346*l.*, nearly *three hundred pounds* more than we had landed with! M—— had given cheques for nearly 1,150*l.*, and, deducting various small expenses, we found we had still within a trifle of 170*l.* clear; we had, moreover 442 head of picked cattle, four horses, good substantial wood buildings and yard, and a very considerable stock of necessaries in our store. As, however, our cheques (bills) did not fall due till, in some instances, twelve months after the date we were calculating from (rather more than less), we could safely calculate on nearly eighty to ninety pounds interest being carried to our credit at the bank, the rate of interest being so high.

Thus, behold us fairly launched, and constantly occupied tending the cattle; which we divided into two lots, always bringing them home at night, for some considerable time after our first arrival. Few evenings passed without our receiving or paying visits to our neighbours. Talking one evening of our first appearance, M—— mentioned that it seemed remarkable to him that strangers should have taken so much trouble, and shown so much kindness, as both Mr. —— and the overseer had done.

Digitized by Google

"No wonder at all," said the old man. "You would give a corner of your blanket, and the half of your supper, to any stranger who might pass; what more, then, is there in taking a little trouble? —nay, more, in the one case you entertain a stranger because he is a stranger; you, on the contrary, were about to become neighbours; and that very fact is, I think, enough to explain all that has been done. But," added the old man, "had you been for months and months together at an out-station, scarcely once in a month seeing the face of a human being, the face of a fellow-man would always afterwards seem to have a claim upon you for kindness and sympathy wherever it was met." This, I believe, explains the reason of the warm reception one everywhere meets with in the bush, so seldom is a strange face seen, often indeed no face, either familiar or otherwise, is seen more frequently than once in a week or fortnight; so seldom I say is the occurrence of a visit that when such a chance does happen, the residents at the spot the wayfarer chances upon, scarcely know how best to show their pleasure; and if a man chose he might live his whole life in the rude abundance of the bush, by passing from spot to spot, a welcome guest at every hut he stumbled upon; the only care of the inhabitants being to keep him with them as long as possible.

We jog along now in a steady sort of fashion; and the first breeding season gave us an increase of one

Digitized by Google

hundred and seven cattle, nearly twenty-five per cent. We sold at different intervals to the sheep stations near forty-six of our calves, at fifteen shillings each, for supplying the shepherds, and nine beasts we at various times killed and salted for ourselves. All our bills having been paid except the two at long dates, we sent down the cheque we had received, and forty picked beasts, with M—— and the hut-keeper, who was rather anxious to receive and spend his wages. They proceeded down the dray-road, but M—— continued to get quit of portions of his charge at several places on the road down; the fact being that the animals were much better bred than the usual run, and consequently were sure to be bought, and we were now beginning to reap the effects of having paid more money for and more attention to good beasts in place of the ordinary run of cattle. On arriving near Melbourne with the remainder of his beasts (fifteen only I believe), M—— proceeded to Mr. ——'s house, and soon by his means found a purchaser for that number; further than this, by the aid and instrumentality of the same gentleman, he succeeded, though with some difficulty, in arranging a transfer of the money which remained in the bank of Adelaide, to one in Melbourne, both M—— and Mr. —— writing to the former city to Mr. ——, our old master, requesting him to be good enough to exchange the bills he held for two payable in Melbourne, which he could easily negotiate in the way of business; this was acceded to

Digitized by Google

and the old bills returned, though we did not receive them until some time after from the bank.

Our total stock was thus but slightly increased, but we had lived well, paid all our debts, improved our herd, and paid into the bank nearly 100*l.* this first year; we could now calculate with safety on doing at least twice as much in the current year.

Our hut-keeper had received from all, leave of absence for a month when they reached the town; but before the time had expired he made his appearance, travel-stained and way-worn, his spree having lasted out his money. The last shilling gone, and his head a little clear, he had left the town and come straight up. This man was one instance of many hundreds, nay, I may say, thousands in Australia; who work well and honestly, but are seized by a desire for a drunken spree. They then draw the amount of money due to them, often as much as two, even three years' wages; sometimes they manage to reach the towns, but more usually pull up at the first place where spirit is procurable, and then seldom stir until every farthing is gone. This consummation requires occasionally but a very short time, as many gamble away what they cannot at once spend in drink, and when all is gone, perhaps in two or three days, a week, or a fortnight, the spree is concluded, and they go back to their occupation until the accumulation of funds and the lapse of time induce them to start off again.

Digitized by Google

It is this failing which keeps men so long servants; in point of fact, were it not for this one curse, no man need remain in servitude for a longer period than three or four years. The savings of that time are sufficient to enable a man of experience to start in a small way; and once on the footing of his own master, it is scarcely probable that he can fail; but, no! these besotted, blinded idiots cannot see beyond the immediate gratification of the moment, and servants they remain and must remain all their lives, bound down by a chain stronger than iron, the bonds of an enslaving and pernicious vice.

Satisfied with the past, and hopeful for the future, we continued our old course of life, the same as I have described, at the station where we were first initiated into the mysteries of stock-keeping. With little variation, the life of one day was the same throughout the year; the only breaks to the routine being visits from strangers and from our neighbours, cattle-branding, and an occasional hunt for some beast or beasts that might take into their heads to stray.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

THE GOLD FIELDS.

"L'HOMME propose, Dieu dispose," says the proverb, and so it proved with us; fondly fancying that we were in the high road of success, we deemed it scarcely possible to be turned aside. The result is another among the myriads of proofs of the vanity of human resolves. The gold-fields of Bathurst were discovered, and, magnified by rumour's thousand tongues, the news reached our part of the world in an incredibly short space of time. Speedily the effect was seen by the dropping off of the shepherds; every day almost brought some new rumour, more extravagant than the one of the day before, and, at last, our hut-keeper, after several days of evident anxiety, was found missing one morning. The overseer told us that seven of the shepherds on the various runs, had also left, forfeiting their wages rather than stick to their agreements; he cordially told us, moreover, that he expected, ere long, we should stand a chance of having all the run to ourselves.

Bitter were the maledictions on the gold which we at first vented; but our man of head, M——, soon

Digitized by Google

brought us back to the reasoning point. He pointed out to us that if the reports were true, even in fact, there was little doubt but that other parts of New South Wales would prove to be gold-fields; that provisions would rise to an extraordinary height, and that we should have no carriers to bring them up, even if we bought them; so that in his opinion we had far better start for Melbourne or Sydney, to dispose of our stock, or else make up our minds to live on the run, using as little tea, &c., as possible, and making up in beef; trusting that whilst our stock was increasing, things might take a turn more favourable to the grazing portion of the community.

"Very good advice," replied I; "but even you, my dear M——, do not speak of living on beef alone, and in the bush too, with your usual tone of determination; and yet, as to parting with our stock, I don't like it."

"Wait, then," answered M——, quietly; "wait."

We did wait, and matters were worse. We had not a soul within a day's ride, except the overseer, who was at his wits' end, with a dozen flocks of sheep straying about. At length he determined to ride down to Melbourne, to report to his master the fix in which he was placed. At his earnest solicitations, we agreed to look after the sheep as well as we could for fourteen days, by which time, we calculated, he could go and return.

I rode down with the dogs to one of the more distant of the sheep stations, and I was indeed shocked to

Digitized by Google

see the state of things;—no sheep were to be seen, but it was plainly evident that the dingoes had been making terrible havoc among them. I tracked the course of the flock with some difficulty, and succeeded in gathering several hundreds by the aid of the dogs. The rascally dingoes, however, had, during the short time they had had their swing, grown so daring, that at some distance ahead of me, in open daylight, I perceived one of them skulking near a belt of brush. Flesh and blood could not stand considering; so, covering his broadside with my piece, he rolled over with a ball through him. I was sorry the next moment, for I thought I should have lost the flock; as they started off at the report. The dogs, however, kept them together, and I contrived to get them all up to the home station, as it was called.

H—— had collected a great number also, and though getting dark, we set to work with hurdles enlarging the fold-yard, so as to keep them safely through the night, if possible. We had told M—— not to be surprised at our absence, as we had calculated on probably camping out in pursuit of the flocks. We made some tea, but even for the bush it was but a rough meal;—then loading our pieces, lighting our pipes, and turning the dogs out, we prepared to pass the night by the fire. Each of us, in fact, was dispirited by what we had seen. For the first time since we had been in the colony, we began to despair of the future; and our good angel, M——, was not with us to reason

Digitized by Google

away the gloom, which, from its very novelty, we felt the more severely. We could not disguise from each other the thoughts over which we were brooding; and sleep being out of the question, we commenced pacing around the fold side by side.

On comparing notes and taxing our memories, we felt convinced that we had only collected the *debris* of three of the flocks; two the overseer had folded, leaving the remaining nine to be accounted for. There were, we knew, fourteen flocks, containing from 500 to 800 each, according to the part of the run allotted to the shepherd; so that we calculated at least two-thirds were dead or strayed. The dingoes, warregals, or whatever name they bear (I believe them all the same species), are not satisfied with devouring a sheep, but bite every one they can; so that we knew it would be a great chance if some of the flocks were not either totally scattered or destroyed. We several times imagined we saw them during the night, and hallooed our dogs at them, not daring to pull trigger for fear of striking one of our own dogs.

Tired out at last, we lay down by the fire in our blankets and slept for some time, but awoke again before daybreak, chilly and gloomy. Heaping up the fire, we sat some time smoking, till, as the first gleams of day began to show above the horizon, I again passed round the fold, to see that all was safe, which, to my great pleasure, I found the case. As I doubted not that dingoes were lurking about, I called the dogs

Digitized by Google

into the hut, and then H—— taking one side, and myself the other, we walked some distance away, to and fro.

As anticipated, before long several sharp, fox-like noses were thrust out to make sure their enemies the dogs were gone, and ere long the bodies followed, as the brutes commenced sneaking over towards the fold, keeping a vigilant eye on us at the same time; evidently knowing nothing of gunpowder, but deeming us quite far enough off to be innocuous. We gradually drew near, and upon H—— giving a whistle, our pieces made a common report, and a pair of the robbers lay in the agonies of death. The second barrel was as promptly delivered by each of us. H—— killed, but the one I aimed at only carried off a broken hind leg, for the dingoe Æsculapius to operate upon.

This lesson, however, seemed to be an effective one; for though we gave them ample time to enter a second appearance, none did so, and we therefore let the dogs loose; Beauty being the first to discover the corpses, and to set his fellows an example in the mode of making a breakfast on them.

The whole day we were on the hunt for stragglers. M—— having brought down the herd early, we left him in charge of the flock—no easy task for one man —460 cattle, and about 1,500 to 1,600 sheep. We made great additions to the number, however, and when M—— thought it advisable some time after noon to leave H—— in charge of the sheep, and to

Digitized by Google

wend his own way home, the total number of fleeces had nearly doubled; and on riding in some time after with another addition, it was at once evident we must take further steps to secure them during the night, unless we wanted a large per centage dead ere morning.

We worked like slaves, making use of everything upon which we could lay our hands; the stock of made hurdles being soon exhausted. H——, however, proved himself much the cleverer of the two, for suddenly stopping in his work, he plainly pronounced us a pair of fools, since by shifting the side hurdles, and making use of those used as partitions for the top and bottom, we could treble or even quadruple the size of the fold with a much less expenditure of labour and materials than was the case as we were then working. No sooner said than done: and by nightfall we had closed all up except a considerable opening near the top; here, however, we lighted a fire apiece, at some feet distance apart, and trusting to the dogs and our fire-arms, we passed the night in peace.

For some days this life continued, but happily we succeeded in gathering together nearly 7,000 sheep; though every day we lost some by the indefatigable warregals, who, in spite of dogs and guns, pertinaciously kept lurking about, evidently knowing that two pair of eyes could not watch, or two pair of hands defend so large a flock. We sometimes shot five or six warregals in the day, and once or twice the

Digitized by Google

dogs succeeded in picking up one. But it was all of no use; come they would, and come they did.

In the forenoon of the twelfth day Mr. —— made his appearance, accompanied by the overseer and six shepherds whom he had induced to come up under an agreement that they should receive 20*l.* each upon the arrival of the flock at a melting station mentioned. He thanked us warmly for our attention to, and trouble with the poor beasts, and said he had lost at least 3,000 of them; and that by the time he had got rid of those we had saved for him, his loss would be at least three to four thousand pounds.

We had thought much about our own prospects during the past days, and this statement had little in it to cause us much longer to hesitate to follow his example; though it was a bitter trial to us to forsake our station, after having contrived to get over the rough part of life's journey. However, the sacrifice we felt had better be made, and we started for Melbourne at the latter end of September, 1851.

We had progressed but a little way, however, before the news was that near Melbourne gold was even more plentiful than at Ophir; and that it was supposed the country round the town, as well as about Ballarat and the vicinity, was highly charged with gold. We had made up our minds to dispose of any of our cattle that we could along the road, and several times we succeeded in selling small lots at good prices. On one occasion, a

Digitized by Google

man bought and paid for forty head, which he told us he intended taking to Ballarat for sale.

We still held on our course towards the town, sending H—— off with forty head, however, towards the spot where the diggings were said to be, in order to sell them there if possible. So well did he succeed, that he reached the road in time to intercept us going on, and he strongly advocated our taking the whole we had across to Ballarat, and disposing of them there. As, however, it did not seem probable that four hundred head would be readily taken up, his motion was negatived, but eighty were placed in his charge to take there; the gold he had received in payment being given to our banker, M——.

Whilst holding on our course we were informed of the discoveries at Mount Alexander, and I in turn resolved to start off with a hundred head for sale. This I did, but did not reach the diggings, as I succeeded in disposing of them at the rate of one ounce per head, long before I came in sight of Mount Alexander. At full speed, I made after M——, but did not overtake him. He reached Melbourne, and at once hastened to get rid of the cattle. Here he was again extremely lucky, being enabled to dispose of a number of bullocks at good prices; which, though never used for draught hitherto, were nevertheless purchased for and trained for that purpose. Several of the best animals passed into the butchers' hands, and for the remainder he had concluded an agreement with one of

Digitized by Google

the boiling-houses some hours before I reached the city.

Two days afterwards H—— made his appearance with a small bag of dust and nuggets, and a stock of wonderful stories respecting the quantity of the precious metal. The whole of the dust, &c., we had received having been disposed of, we found that, owing to the loose weights used by our customers, we had come out of the *melée* considerable gainers; our cattle having fetched on an average nearly four pounds a head: the total sum in M——'s hands being within a very little of 1,800*l.*

When, on his return, he informed us of this, incredulity was our first sensation; but we were soon convinced that it was indeed a fact; and that with all our fears during the last seven months, we had at that moment in the bank upwards of 2,000*l.*

"Hurrah! hurrah! and now for the diggings," shouted H——. "I have seen them work, and I know all about it."

Little discussion was necessary. It was all we could do; and only waiting to procure a few necessary articles, we set off to try our luck at the "Diggings."

You ask in your letters for a more detailed account of the country, &c., than I have yet given. You know I am but a poor naturalist, but I will do my best

Digitized by Google

so far as I have seen of the country. In the first place, then, everything depends upon the more or less abundant supply of water. Many thousands, I may say millions, of acres of good land are totally useless from the want of water. The soil, where it is not of the most arid description, bears shrub and grass sufficient for extensive pasturage, and as a general rule is of great capability. In the gardens which we have in the rear of our huts, we cultivate all kinds of vegetables, much finer, and in many instances better flavoured than those in England; and I am told that around the towns, grapes, melons, peaches, &c., of an immense size and fine flavour, grow profusely under cultivation.

We have several apple and pear trees which, however, require care, though they reward us abundantly. We have tried also to grow tobacco, and have produced some very strong and full-flavoured leaves, but the culture is accompanied by such unceasing care and supervision, that as an amusement it becomes tiresome, and as a speculation would, I fear, in Australia prove an entire failure. Our onions and potatoes thrive famously, as indeed in one sweeping clause I may say of almost the whole of our English garden plants.

Flowers are too common to be regarded, and in addition to the natural blooms which are met with, it is but necessary to plant a flower or shrub, and in another year the place will teem with it.

Digitized by Google

What think you of hedge-rows being formed of geranium, flowering myrtle, fuchsias, roses, and many other of your choicest flowers? Yet here such is indeed the case, and they are passed unheeded. But of all things the bush is the great wonder: in some parts huge trees, standing alone like columns of an arcade, extend as far as the eye can reach, producing a saddening and desponding effect on the mind of the traveller. In other places, huge forests of Australian cedar and mahogany (in colonial parlance), with the whole of the intervening spaces filled up with a dense growth of underwood. This is *par excellence* "the bush," and though bad enough in all conscience with the huge trees towering aloft, it would be infinitely worse without them.

Travelling in the tangled bush is most dangerous. Numerous and well authenticated instances are known of persons losing their way and perishing in these labyrinths where scarcely a soul passes from month to month. In the cedar bush, however, one seldom passes along far without meeting with sawyers' huts, or coming unexpectedly on a pair hard at work, sawing in a rough pit, or on logs raised from the ground.

This class of men are usually strong, hearty men at first, but almost invariably of a death-like pallor, occasioned, I believe, both by the dense exhalations arising from the ground, as also from the exclusion of light by the heavy masses of foliage beneath which they work. In a few years, too, they generally become

Digitized by Google

martyrs to rheumatism, and many die victims to cold and consumption, contracted in those forest shades. In the recesses of the bush and forest are found many secure hiding-places, which were, and still are, though not to so great a degree, made use of by a class of men, whose profession is the obtaining cattle from dishonest servants, and then driving them to one of the other provinces for sale. Some years ago this practice prevailed to an almost incredible degree, and in the penal settlements it is still by no means uncommon.

The woods produced in these dense forests are as a general rule remarkably good, being fit for all kinds of house and ship work, and several of them for cabinet-making. The cedar is, however, decidedly the best. The gum woods, of which there are several species, are extremely hard, but rather liable to fly on a sudden strain.

Of animals and birds I can tell you but little. We have shot several kangaroos, and poor Chance nearly received his *quietus* from "an old man," as an old buck kangaroo is called. They use their claws with great force, and had I not put a ball into his head, I fear my poor dog would have been killed. As it was he was greatly torn, and required nursing for some weeks before he recovered his strength and courage. Still, though so preciously mauled, he has since more than once ran in at one of them at bay. We have besides bandicoots and opossums, the latter

Digitized by Google

no joke to attack unless with a gun, as they bite most severely, and are not easily daunted.

Hosts of rats, too, may be met with, and Chance has more than once been indebted to them for a meal. Parrots, jays, crows, paroquets, thrushes, and magpies, are the only birds I have seen; and unfortunately all scream, and none sing. The parrots and paroquets are innumerable, and although the magnificent appearance which they present when a flock of them take flight, is pleasing to the eye, yet the discordant screaming which is constantly heard, is more than a counterbalance to the pleasure the eye receives. I have often wished to see the emu, but have not, neither has any one of my companions.

In the stream which runs about a short half-mile from us—by-the-bye, it is called a river here—we catch eels and a kind of carp, also a fish something like a bass, all good eating, but we rarely can spare time to try for them. The invalids, when there are any—which is but rarely, none of us having been ill, though once or twice a tumble in a hole has incapacitated a man for a day or two—the invalids are about the only ones who can indulge in the luxury of fishing. Neither can I give you a scientific catalogue of reptiles. I believe iguanas are to be found, though I have never seen them; but lizards, some of them of the most brilliant and lovely hues, are extremely plentiful. Of snakes we have

Digitized by Google

hosts, and how we escape them is miraculous. The laziness, which I think I before mentioned to you, is the only reason I can assign that has preserved us from death a thousand times over.

The most deadly is a yellow snake, which ranges from about seven to fourteen inches in length, and is rather thin; the bite of this reptile is certain death unless the wound is immediately cauterised. There are besides green, black, and mottled snakes; also some little things not above four or five inches long, and the thickness of a small quill; others are as large round as a man's forearm, others again are of great length. I have been assured of their being met of upwards of twenty feet long. This species we used to call the diamond snake. I should think in all there cannot be less than from twenty to thirty species, and yet it is but very rarely that an instance of being bitten is heard of.

There are, besides these, black and reddish-coloured scorpions, which are apt to be tiresome, getting behind boxes, or anything which has been a long time a fixture. One of our people was stung in the wrist by a scorpion, while lifting some wood for the fires. I tied a handkerchief tightly above the wound, and a second near the shoulder, sending off to endeavour to procure some oil. I opened the wound and commenced bathing it with hot water; luckily oil was procured, and after bathing the wound with it hot, and making the man swallow some, we concluded we

Digitized by Google

had done all we could, nothing like a surgeon being within sixty or seventy miles. Our remedy proved effectual, for though the arm was swollen and useless for some days, the patient suffering severely, yet by continuing the bathing the wound healed, and the man was all right in about a week.

We have, also, musquitoes who bite like furies, and a species of locust, or tree-cricket, which makes a noise that would induce one to believe it was a dozen, not one. Where the trees swarm with them, as they do in some places in summer, you may imagine the concert. Fleas, too, are as numerous as in Egypt, for, by all accounts, that plague still remains there; and wherever the soil is at all sandy, or there are sheep about, the open air is the best resting-place for the traveller.

So much for the plagues: the land itself, as I told you, depends much upon the water. Along the banks of the streams, the land is generally good, and would be highly appreciated by a farmer; but at any distance, the land, though perhaps equally good, bears but badly, from the heat parching up the blades of grass. The hollows, too, are always good soil. When rain does fall here, it comes down with a vengeance—torrents is a *mild* term—and, in consequence, all the soil is washed from the heights, and deposited in these hollows. It is in consequence of the inequality of the producing qualities of the land, that such immense runs are required for the cattle, or sheep; for if the season be particularly dry, you may see a narrow belt

Digitized by Google

of grass, and bushes fringing the banks of the water-course, whilst all else is dressed in a russet gown of parched and dried-up herbage. The same plot of ground which just after the rains will support 100 cattle, will not, in the summer, supply food for ten. So much is this the case, that it is a common practice with cattle-breeders to limit their stock to a certain number; the surplus every year, if not sold, are driven down to the town, killed, and boiled down for tallow.

To your questions about cattle and sheep, I am somewhat averse to replying too confidently, as though I am succeeding, I am working it out myself, whilst too many in this country are better pleased to leave their affairs in the hands of an overseer, seldom making their appearance at the stations more than twice or thrice in the year. However, I will give you *my opinion*, and that is, that no man should think of keeping either cattle or sheep, without first making himself perfectly aware of what he is about to do; he should visit the run he intends to enter upon, examine its eligibility, as regards low lands and high lands, both of which there ought to be in a run; the mode by which water is obtained, whether from a constant stream or not; the species of timber and brush around; and last, not least, the neighbours he has to deal with. He should then see the stock he is going to purchase, and know who is the seller; he should be perfectly clear about terms and agreements; he should seek far and near for good servants, and not haggle for a

Digitized by Google

pound per annum to get them; all these are preliminary, but most important points, for on them all his future welfare and success depends—I am supposing, of course, that the intending stock-owner knows his business; if not, he must either obtain a trustworthy and intelligent overseer (a troublesome and expensive mode of work), *or he must do as I did—go to school to learn his trade.* It is a bad plan to commence with a large number of either cattle or sheep, and whatever you buy, should be got, if possible, from persons near at hand, not only because you are likely to be better treated, but also if the stock walk back to their old home, which is frequently the case, they are more readily recovered. It is really wonderful the distance cattle will return to a run on which they have been bred, passing through an almost impenetrable bush, and arriving before their (sometimes) mounted pursuers.

Of one thing, persons should above all beware—viz., of public auctions; it is not, by any means, a rare occurrence for a herd of cattle to be sold, which the owner had not been able to get together for months, owing to their excessive wildness; or, perhaps, a flock of sheep may be the lot knocked down, so infected with scab, or foot-rot, that a month may suffice to sweep off the whole lot. It is very certain, that if a man is desirous of purchasing cattle, sheep, or horses, if he only let it become known, he will speedily be offered animals with which he will be satisfied, and

Digitized by Google

at a reasonable rate, instead of, as is too often the case, paying exorbitantly in auction-rooms for diseased sheep or cattle, which he may, perhaps, *see*, but which he will never be enabled to get inside his stock-yard.

For a young hand commencing life here, I should always recommend cattle-breeding; it is certainly not so lucrative, but it is equally certain that it is much safer. If a man can afford to have a hundred or a thousand sheep swept off by rot, drought, or any of the ills to which sheep are subject, well and good—it is but one of the chances of his speculation; but for a man who has to make his fortune, I consider sheep-keeping to be little short of madness; a bad shepherd and a score of dingoes will ruin a sheep-owner (a small one I mean, of course) in six months.

If, then, it be determined to begin with cattle, a man should do as I have before said — see the run he intends to occupy, and the cattle he intends to buy. Get a good stockman and a hut-keeper—the owner himself must form a third hard worker; in point of fact, if he but know his business, he should be his own stockman; a hut-keeper, then, will be all that is necessary for him. Get a small stock-yard and gallows run up, and also a hut; then bargain with some wealthy neighbour to bring up the supplies at the time he brings his own; buy from 100 to 150 head of cattle at first, and, as you get on, purchase more, hire more men, buy a dray and team, and, s many more have done before you, be sober, indus-

Digitized by Google

trious, and careful; then *succeed and grow rich.* It is a hard life, but it is a merry and a healthy one. The climate is splendid; and a night, or a score of nights, in the open air is laughed at. Except in the sombre depths of the forest, we hear nothing of colds or illness of any kind. Living well, prospering, and enjoying good health, what can you seek for more?

The rage for gold increases every day; yet, in spite of the vast sums found and to be found, of what avail is it? Prices are as enormous as the amounts the diggers obtain. They must live, and must pay for living. Depend upon it, the Australian farmers, cattle-breeders, and sheep-owners, will prove in the end to be the real gold-finders. Meantime, at the diggings and in the bush—in town and country—for every grade and every class—we have room and to spare. If they will work, they can obtain immense wages at anything they choose to turn to; and if all England were to pour in one vast torrent upon our shores, we should still have room and employment for all!

Before entering upon *our* adventures in quest of the yellow god, it might, perhaps, be as well to say something of the manner in which gold was discovered; and, also, what I can state respecting the kind of soil in which it generally occurs. I am no mineralogist nor geologist, so that the little I have to say will all be in as plain English as I can command, without technicalities of any kind.

Digitized by Google

It appears that, for many years, suspicions had been entertained that the rocks and sands of Australia contained the precious metal. Even as far back as 1838-39, this was confidently asserted; and, both by pamphlets and in the columns of the colonial press, the probability, if not the absolute certainty, of the presence of gold was strongly and frequently advocated from that time up to the date when it was placed beyond doubt by the discoveries of Mr. Hargraves in the earlier half of the year 1851—a year which will form a memorable epoch, a brilliant starting-point in the history of the Australian colonies.

It seems, indeed, a strange, almost a startling fact, that thus, for nearly twelve years, with a constant note of warning ringing in their ears, the great bulk of our inhabitants never seemed to dream even of the wondrous truth which was to burst upon them like a thunder peal; that they were living amidst, treading upon, masses and sands of gold; and equally strange t seems that thousands were traversing the wilds n which it was to be found, shepherds and cattle-drivers, the trader and the cattle-farmer, all intent upon the acquisition of a metal which they were heedlessly trampling under foot. It seems almost to give countenance to the opinion of the diggers themselves, who assert that, either the Almighty blinded the eyes of men until the poor of England had congregated in Australian lands, to enjoy the good He had prepared for them, or else (the more philo-

Digitized by Google

sophical adopt this idea) that a peculiar process of chemistry has been slowly going on of late years, which has thus, on a sudden, laid bare before the eyes of a wondering world, riches such as were scarcely dreamed of even in the palmiest and most hopeful days of Mexico and Peru. These notions, though naturally erroneous and wild, still tend to show the opinions of people in this part of the globe. It is, as is proudly and emphatically asserted, "the poor man's land." God provides wealth and abundance, if it is toiled for; abundance far greater than the commerce of the old world can attain—greater even than the boasted "diggings" of California can yield to the labour of its inhabitants.

Such are the ideas, such the language, of our "diggers;" and, though fallacious they may be, they are still true in some measure, in a particular point of view. Thus, the poor man, inured to labour and a life of hardship, cares little for the hard fare and unceasing toil which is required to succeed in this style of life. True it is, that where, on ordinary occasions, a gentleman obtains one pound of gold, a labouring man obtains *two;* still there is this vast difference, that the poor man squanders, in nine cases out of ten, the whole, which he has literally acquired by the sweat of his brow; and this simple circumstance explains why so very, very few return hence to England. Many there are, doubtless, who save and remit largely home for the purpose of paying the passages

Digitized by Google

of their relations; but these are the exceptions, not the rule.

But I am wandering terribly wide of my subject: I was speaking of the discovery, &c., of gold in these colonies. Well then, in spite of all that had been said or written up to 1851, but little public notice was attracted to the subject; so little, indeed, that many persons had left here for California, and many others contemplated doing so, when an announcement was made which, though at first scarcely credited, speedily turned the flood of emigration full upon, instead of from our shores.

In one of the papers published at Sydney a paragraph appeared, stating that in the western country there was no longer any doubt of the existence of gold, inasmuch as a Mr. Hargraves, who had spent some time in California, had proved that not only did it exist, but in such considerable quantities, that men were clearing upwards of *two pounds* a day under all the disadvantages of non-acquaintance with the subject, and imperfect machinery. This was speedily followed by the Government officer's account, fully substantiating Mr. Hargraves' statement, and in one moment a mania arose which has never lessened, but, on the contrary, increased to an extent beyond all precedent. Work was speedily at a stand-still; for the distance from Sydney was so trifling, that three or four days' tramp brought the speculator to the spot.

Digitized by Google

The discoveries had scarcely commenced throughout the whole of the Bathurst and Wellington districts, and immense fields were brought into work, when the colony of Victoria or Port Phillip followed in the path of discovery, and Ballarat and Mount Alexander were announced as far exceeding even the Turon diggings in richness and extent.

Onwards rolled the wave, until it was found that almost every creek and gully in these districts was more or less impregnated with the precious metal. From all parts flocked aspirants for wealth; the flocks and herds were left straying in the bush for want of tendance; ships lay useless in every harbour, no men to navigate them; shops were shut up; ladies cleaned their own shoes, made their beds, and cooked the dinners; judges had to groom their own horses, and fetch water from the well, or the meat for their dinners from the butcher's shop; all order in the towns was at an end; every one and every thing tending towards that magnet—the gold diggings.

The enormous mass (nearly a hundredweight, I believe) of pure gold which had been discovered by the black servant of a gentleman named Kerr, gave a prodigious spur to the feverish excitement which prevailed; and the constant succession of considerable-sized nuggets which was announced, many of them of great value, tended to keep alive the feeling. Emigration on a vast scale from the neighbouring colonies set in; so much so, that large rewards were offered for the dis-

Digitized by Google

covery of other fields, in order to retain the population; and I believe it was principally in consequence of one of these offers of reward that the Melbourne diggings were discovered.

Great, no doubt, are the benefits of these wondrous discoveries to the poorer classes, but dire has been the injury to the wealthier portions of the community; and I still confidently believe that the country would have been more prosperous, the people more *permanently* happy and well-to-do in the world, had no grain of gold ever existed throughout the extent of the land. Ultimately, the effect will without doubt be, that into the hands of the agriculturalist and the grazier will pass much of the vaunted wealth of the diggers; even now, so vast, so exorbitant, are the charges for all species of commodities, whether of food, of clothing, defence, or luxury, that the diggers are not so very much richer than they were formerly, as townsmen or countrymen; for, with the acquisition of wealth, has come the desire of spending it, and few, very few, are to be found capable or willing to save.

In order to sum up in a few brief words: the principal New South Wales diggings are about sixty to eighty miles from Sydney, and about the same distance in the sister colony from Melbourne. These distances are not those of the high roads in England, but approximately judged at by horses' legs. All round, for miles and miles, the creeks, gullies, &c., abound with

Digitized by Google

the metal; and I have little doubt it will be found throughout the whole of the colonies, more or less, before long; whether it will tend eventually to their well-being is a problem which time only can solve, but of which, I must confess, I am not very sanguine.

And now for the soils in which it is generally found, and the forms in which it makes its appearance. At the different diggings, the soils lie in different strata; and the confusion of these soils is so great that, in many places, the difference in the thickness of one certain bed of gravel or clay will vary in a few feet of surface—five, ten, or perhaps double that number of feet. The gold occurs, more or less, in all the various strata; and, in some instances, the surface-soil has been peculiarly rich. At the Victoria diggings—beneath the surface-soil—lies a thick bed of gravel, then comes a bed of a reddish, mixed marly earth, containing good quantities of gold; but little time is usually spent upon this, as, immediately below, lies a bed of blue clay, containing gold in sufficient quantities to satisfy even the longings of our avaricious seekers; below this, again, occurs a stratum of slate, varying in thickness, but extremely rich in "pockets," as they are technically termed. These pockets are holes or fissures in the slate, in which the gold has been deposited; sometimes in pure nuggets or lumps, at other times mixed up with extraneous matter. This is the general formation; but in some places the red and yellow marl are more compact and of greater thickness than

Digitized by Google

in others; and large masses or boulders of a kind of granite are found in the clay-beds, materially increasing the labour. The quantity of gold varies, also, wonderfully. Sometimes from the very surface-soil right away down into the slate, the metal is found abundantly; instances having occurred of a party realizing as much as from 1,500*l.* to 2,000*l.* out of one single hole; others, on the contrary, will sink half-a-dozen holes, and find scarcely a grain of gold the whole time. They persevere, and perhaps the very next more than rewards them for their whole time and toil.

Immense quantities of gold exist intermingled with, or imbedded in quartz, and the piece which Dr. Kerr's shepherd discovered was of this character. Very much of this, however, can never be worked with profit until a regularly organized system of gold-crushing and refining shall be brought into working order; and then, I have but little doubt, enormous sums will be made, as, in several places, roads, and even bridges, I am informed, have been constructed of the auriferous stone. Nuggets occur plentifully, also, in the beds of the various mountain streams, creeks, and gullies; in the bottoms of water-holes; and in the various hollows which occur throughout the country. All this last class (nuggets) are evidently produced by one cause: the rock or soil in which they were primarily imbedded having been washed away by water, these lumps have been deposited, together with the

Digitized by Google

debris of the enveloping materials, and are naturally found in the lowest levels. Some of the creeks have proved most extraordinarily productive.

The various features of the gold formation stand, therefore, thus:—In water-worn nuggets, nearly pure, among the pebbles and boulders of water-courses, and in the more rocky portions of the "fields." In variously shaped and constituted nuggets in quartz, slate, iron-stone (granite, I rather fancy), the different coloured marls and clays. In scales, small grains, and dust, amongst the sand and earth, constituting the upper strata of the earth's surface; and in the same form, in the mud and sand at the bottom of the water-courses, ponds, and streams.

Wherever a stream is being worked, it is a great point of ambition to obtain a license for any portion where there is an angle in the bank; should a mass of rock project its rugged front into the stream, it is a lucky man who works that spot; or, should the roots of some old tree have crept into the bed of the creek, still more fortunate is the holder of the claim considered.

The rationale of this is, that at all these spots, or spots of a similar description, a species of eddy is formed, which allows all the gold which the thick waters have hitherto held in suspension to sink by its greater specific gravity to the bottom; whilst a great part of the extraneous matter is still carried off, and, as may be supposed, some of the richest

Digitized by Google

pockets have been found at or about such places as these.

The bed claims, as they are called in contradistinction to the bank claims, are usually tolerably productive, but liable to this mishap, that, perhaps, when in full work, a fall of rain comes on—at a distance may be—and the torrent pouring on whelms the bed claim in a mass of rubbish, destroying all the previous labour, and leaving a bitter legacy, in the shape of decayed vegetable rubbish and huge boulders to be removed, ere the spot can again be experimented upon. This calamity cannot well happen to the bank claim, except under peculiar circumstances. It may, indeed, be a benefit to them as affording an increased supply of water for the purpose of washing the soil, which operation, by-the-bye, I had better now describe to you.

There are several modes, some of them too scientific by half, as well as too expensive, to suit the tastes of the diggers, who think much more about "nuggets," than about "dust." One of these, the "Californy cradle," in diggers' parlance, is of two forms: one of them has the bottom pierced with holes, the earth is mixed with water, and thrown into the cradle, which is kept in motion; the gold from its great weight (nineteen times that of water) falls through the holes and unites with a quantity of quicksilver in the compartment below, the greater portion of the sand and mud passing off with the water, the remainder being easily removed from the surface of the quicksilver. The

Digitized by Google

other form is on the same plan, but a little more simple: the cradle is made deeper with a deep ledge, the quicksilver is at the bottom, the soil is thrown in with water and sharply agitated, so that the gold falls and forms an amalgam, and the refuse is swept off. As both these ways require an apparatus for procuring a divorce between the loving couple, who, to speak truth, cling most closely to each other, you may well believe few attempt to use them, and those few lose more time fiddle-faddling about a small portion of gold, than would suffice for them to wash ten times the quantity. The common rocking cradle, if well made, is a most efficient mode of obtaining the metal from the substances accompanying it. If not well made, or carelessly or clumsily managed, of course large quantities must be lost, but even at the worst, it has answered the purpose for which it was designed. This common cradle is much like its namesake for babies, but standing higher for the sake of convenience in washing. It slants away slightly from the head to the foot, having small bars fastened across at the bottom from side to side, in order to arrest the motion of stones, nuggets of gold, and indeed all gold which may be mixed up with the earth; at the head of some is a grating, but others have a deep cleet, so that the water does not run off with so great a force.

When a bucket-full or cart-full of earth is to be washed, a portion of the stuff is thrown in, and water

Digitized by Google

poured on it, earth and water being supplied as necessary, until, in the opinion of the cradler, sufficient has been done; the cradle all this time having been in motion, the water has taken up the greater part of the earthy materials and sand, and has carried them over the foot-rails, leaving behind the heavier stones and almost the whole of the gold, which, from its great weight, being liberated by the agitation of the water, falls, and passing along the bottom of the cradle is arrested by the bars. The stones are then examined to see if any nuggets are among them, the refuse is swept out, the nuggets and gold-dust put into a bucket by the side of the cradle, and the same course of proceeding is gone through again.

Many of the poorer classes of diggers at first commence operations with a common tin-dish, and after a few trials seldom fail to acquire a peculiar knack of so turning the wrist and hand, that every twist sends from the edge of the dish a portion of water, earth, and sand, the whole of the heavier matter drawing towards the centre. In this primitive style they succeed in realizing considerable quantities of gold. In both these ways all but the very small scale gold is obtained, though when the "diggings" were first discovered, whether it was from ignorance or an impatient desire of finding masses I cannot say, but so it was that large quantities of good-sized grains of gold were obtained by washing the *refuse* of the first diggers' cradled stuff.

Digitized by Google

And now to our own proceedings. Before I digressed, we were about to start for Mount Alexander to cast our lot in with the other seekers for gold. We had met two persons, one a shopkeeper, the other his assistant, who were also about to leave Melbourne. After some little talk we decided upon joining our forces. We had a considerable quantity of stores, of which a rough valuation was made; our new companions purchasing a tent of canvass, a cradle, and other things, such as shovels and pickaxes, to square matters with us, the difference being adjusted afterwards. Finding that prices were so enormous, we only bought what was absolutely necessary, trusting to pick up odds and ends at the "diggings" from parties desirous of disposing of them.

We engaged with a dray which was going up, to carry all our traps and stores, as also the two townsmen; we three being on horseback with our dogs at our heels, for we could not induce ourselves to part with our old friends, on whose backs so many hundred miles had been traversed. We were all well armed and in high spirits, though at first we grumbled sorely at the slow pace of the bullocks; but in the excitement of hearing the news of the diggings, and watching the crowds that passed and repassed, this cause of annoyance was soon forgotten.

It was a matter of astonishment to us, long unused to see more than a score of human beings at a time, now on a sudden to perceive horsemen and drays full

Digitized by Google

of passengers, and pedestrians in plenty, all wending in numbers towards the common centre of attraction and hope. Then a down dray would pass, questions being shouted by all as they passed to learn what news, the answers serving only to excite still more the universal enthusiasm. Soon a party from the diggings was met with, who, with laughter, jeered those going up for their dilatory movements, boasting of the treasure they had obtained, and declaring their intention of stopping in town only to dispose of the gold, and place the proceeds in safety, and then to return. Amid such scenes passed our first day's journey.

On camping for night, the oxen and horses were turned loose, our fire lighted, and a good meal soon got ready, and then looking to our arms, we passed the night in forgetfulness.

Early morn saw us on our way; the road had been tolerably good the day before, but now was not only naturally bad, but so cut up by the unceasing stream of passengers and beasts, that we were obliged to be careful of our way, and clouds of dust did not tend, by any means, to render our passage up more agreeable.

We halted that night near some water-pools, around and in the vicinity of which at least two hundred others were assembled, and wild and picturesque in the highest degree was the scene thus formed; the blazing fires, with forms flitting about, or seated in groups around, the animals feeding in the back ground; the laugh, shout, and, not unfrequently,

Digitized by Google

the loudly uttered oath; dark trees in the background, and still further back, the heavy and threatening masses of the hills, all conspired to lend a character of wildness to the scene which, to my eyes at least, rendered it doubly enchanting. Nor be it supposed that this wildness was in look alone: every one in these groups was armed, and the greater number, before disposing themselves to rest, discharged their pieces in the air, and, reloading them, seemed prepared for a night attack. This custom, to our eyes, however, was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, as, thanks to an occasional shot at a bird or a beast, we felt that our good doubles were in working order, and, to tell the truth, I always have placed as much faith in the teeth of "Chance," or of "Beauty," as even in a leaden ball, though my own hand pull the trigger, and missing is a bad habit, to which I have never given much encouragement. This uproar of voices and discharging guns, lasted for some two or three hours after camping, and then a silence fell upon the scene, interrupted only by the bark of a dog, the uneasy motions of the cattle, or the hurried exclamation and deep oath from some one whose slumbers had been interrupted by the cold nose of a bullock or horse touching his face.

Our third day's journey brought us up to the mount, we having performed the distance one stage, or day's journey, less than usual, the dray being light, and ourselves mounted. We had been surprised, as I

Digitized by Google

have said, at the numbers passing and repassing, and also bivouacked at the various halting-places; but the scene upon our arrival at Golden Point was indeed wonderful, causing us almost to discredit the evidence of our senses. In every direction, the neighbourhood was covered with tents, huts, bark shelties, and all kinds of contrivances to keep some sort of cover over head. The ground was burrowed in every direction, pits of all sorts of depths and shapes yawned in one's pathway, and, in particular spots, the men were congregated in crowds, which at first induced in us the belief that a quarrel was taking place, but which turned out to be merely the gathering around some lucky find, each digger trusting to hit upon rich veins, or pockets, in such a vicinity. There were not a few also who, like ourselves, were surveying the wondrous scene before us with blank looks of astonishment and dismay, for the first natural feeling was, that in such a crowd all the land must have been searched and all the gold found.

Squaring accounts with our dray-driver, we took out our traps, and after a little search finding a convenient spot to pitch our tent, we hobbled the horses, committed them to old "Chance's" care, got in all our goods, put our pistols in a belt, and started off to reconnoitre the place around; a few carelessly-put questions gave us an insight into the state of affairs, though we could gain no information whatever as to the find of gold, all hands agreeing in affirming the

Digitized by Google

spots on which they were severally at work to be very poor. Selecting a spot close to where one of the most considerable groups were hard at work, we paid our license fee, pegged out the space allowed, and, as there was still some time of the day left, resolved to clear off the superincumbent soil, which, though in many instances yielding gold, is rarely worth much trouble, the lower strata being far richer, and the gold more easily obtainable.

A couple of hours' hard work carried us down nearly three feet through the soil, and by this time we felt the want of food and rest, and resolved not to make any attempt upon the gravel, which now showed itself. We accordingly shouldered our tools, and wended our way back, praying devoutly that supper would be ready. As for my back, I verily believed I should never stand upright again during life, I felt so stiff from continuous stooping, shovelling out the earth, and the others were all much of a muchness. All around the "diggers" were returning to their tents, some singly, some in companies, but all on the alert, and armed to the teeth; it was plain confidence and security had fled from Golden Point, and that each for himself was both the spirit and the letter of the law.

Supper was luckily ready when we reached our tent, and making a hearty meal, we proceeded to enter into arrangements respecting work and cooking. Five slips of paper were numbered one to five re-

Digitized by Google

spectively, and put into a hat, and as we drew them, so did each stand for cooking and housekeeping duty. I was number two, so that I had a day's work prior to my cooking day. During the evening we commenced making acquaintances round, and found that a serious feeling of discontent was prevalent, owing to the ill-advised measures of the colonial government, in passing an act doubling the license-fee, which had been 30*s.*, and making it 8*l.*

A second act had called upon all the diggers to act as constables, under the penalty of being considered rogues and vagabonds, and being treated accordingly. We having only, however, paid the single fee, we inquired the reason, and found that the first act, doubling the fee, was generally understood to be the effect of a clique in the Assembly, who, alarmed at a petition which had been presented, praying for a revision of the electoral lists, had contrived to get this bill pushed through the House, making the fee, moreover, to be paid by every one employed in any way in connection with the gold—whether digging or not. Meetings had been held, and the diggers resolved rather to resist the fee altogether, than to pay the increased one, and the consequence has been that both bills have become dead letters, and the old license-fee is still paid. The feeling of irritation against the Government, however, still existed, and committees had been formed to protect the interests, and watch over the welfare of the great body of

Digitized by Google

miners; and I do not doubt, should the Government be so foolish as to endeavour to enforce these and other obnoxious acts, that arms will be taken up to repel force by force.

The next morning, four of us were speedily at work throwing the gravel out of our claim, working steadily and together; after about three hours' work, we returned to breakfast, then worked till a short time after noon, when we had our dinners; then again until dark, when we had tea, or supper, as in bush phrase we termed it. This only lasted a short time, as we afterwards worked through the day, making our only meal after breakfast late in the evening. When we returned in the evening, the gravel was out, or almost so; and the next day we commenced on a hard, compact bed of a red concrete marl, intermingled with boulders of granite and quartz, and also with gray marl. In the mean time I was at home preparing breakfast of beef, tea, and damper; when the others returned, they told me that it was very hard work, the picks making but little impression. At it they went again, and the three succeeding days saw us still driving furiously at the compact mass At the end of that time, however, M——, in throwing out some of the rubbish, discovered a lump of quartz intermingled with small gold grains, like peas; a short time sufficed to clear out the grains, and a closer search was rewarded by the discovery of nearly four ounces, in the interstices of the cluster of boul-

Digitized by Google

ders we were digging out. Though but a trifling quantity, this unlooked-for success inspirited us, and, indeed, we stood in need of it.

The constant work with the pick blistered our hands to such a degree, that it was no uncommon thing for us to have the handles clammy with the blood, whilst the pain was excruciating, and in addition, the labour of throwing out the refuse stuff, joined to our working in so confined a space, made our arms, backs, and loins ache most fearfully. However, we kept each other up, and played our parts manfully, few words of complaint being heard, and those invariably with a laugh. Eight or nine days saw the bottom of this confounded stuff, and we anticipated plenty of success now that we had come to the clay—the gold formation *par excellence*. Digging out the clay, we set to work searching and washing, and though not in any great quantities, realized every day gold enough to keep us going on in good temper.

As we were returning one evening rather more than a fortnight after our arrival, I perceived a face which I at once recognized, and stepping up to the person, said, "Ah, Mr. ——, so you have left Adelaide and your cattle to come digging." 'Twas our old master, who we found had come up and joined our friend Mr. ——, and several others all more or less injured in pocket by the terrible effects of the gold mania. Both our old friends were delighted to see us, and insisted on sending a small keg of brandy to our tent

Digitized by Google

for our private use. Well meant, and with a kind heart, was the present made, but it well nigh involved us in a serious scrape.

I mentioned the doubling the gold license-fee, which by-the-bye is not a tax upon gold, but upon the chance of obtaining it—one of the greatest pieces of injustice that was ever perpetrated. Well, soon after this precious act miscarried, orders were given to seize all spirits, &c., coming up to the diggings, the aim and end ostensibly being to put a stop to "sly grog-selling," so as to keep the diggers from drinking and quarrelling; a whole brood of informers instantly sprang up, and acts of the grossest injustice were every day perpetrated by the convict policemen, in the name and by the sanction of the law.

Arbitrary seizures of private property for private use were made, and heavy fines inflicted, though in several instances the committees paid the fines, and instituted proceedings against the Commissioner and Government. This being premised, I will now go on. One of these policemen chanced to see this same small keg (about two and a half gallons for five men) come into our tent. In five minutes after, three of them entered and announced their intention of handcuffing us, and taking us before the Commissioner. "I rather guess you'll do no such thing," was H——'s reply as he cocked his piece. "Be quiet, H——," said M——, and putting one of the fellows aside with his hand, all three looking very blue at our attitude of

Digitized by Google

resistance, he called to several of the diggers who were standing about. Our beauties would now gladly have beaten a retreat, but could not, as a crowd was speedily round our tent, and in a few minutes our two friends also pushed through the assembled people to see what was the matter. M—— then explained the case, pointing out that we had received the spirit as a present from a friend, that it was in our tent without the slightest attempt at concealment; and finally we were freed from the delicate attention of the police. Had not several of us interfered, I verily believe they would have stood a poor chance in the crowd, although they were armed; however, they were allowed to pass scot free, we having made up our minds to resist, should they endeavour to enforce so arbitrary a stretch of power. *We heard no more, however, of the matter.*

Frankly and fairly speaking, the Colonial Government seem to be doing everything they can to compel the diggers to break into open revolt, and if they succeed, the worse it will be for the authors of the movement. Eighty thousand or a hundred thousand men are not easily set moving, but once in motion, no barrier is strong enough to oppose the impetus of such a body.

We continued washing and fossicking until we had cleared our claim down to the slate stone beneath, carefully examining the surface of that formation for pockets. Having fairly cleared all out, we found that

Digitized by Google

we had made in twenty-three days about 360*l.*, giving each of us 72*l.* for less than a month's work.

We set to work sinking another hole, and though from habit, and our hands being better used to the toil, we could get on faster, yet we felt the jarring of the stone more perhaps than at first, on account of the bolder and freer manner in which we handled our tools. The strata were much the same all round, varying only in thickness, and we sunk in all here seven holes, from which, on squaring accounts, and paying expenses, we found we had netted a sum of 3,400*l.*, or rather gold which at a rough calculation would net that amount in Melbourne.

A strange circumstance caused us to strike our tent without parade, and vanish from Golden Point. I had noticed a man (digging in company with several others) of whose features I entertained some vague feelings of recollection; yet though for days I was endeavouring to recall who it was, I could not succeed. This party had been gone some time from our vicinity, when one evening, as I stood before the tent smoking, I beheld my unknown slowly walking along the edge of a gully at a distance, and as I stood looking I thought I detected a kind of beckoning signal to me. Merely saying to M—— and H—— that I was about to take a stroll round, I felt that my pistols were safe, whistled softly to the dogs, and sauntered slowly towards, but not in a direct line to, where the man was standing. I knew I was not acting wisely, as there were plun-

Digitized by Google

derers about who stood upon little ceremony; and there is no doubt but that the police, instead of assisting the plundered man, frequently shared in the booty obtained. When I was near the spot where the man stood, he turned, and as if then first observing me, bade me "good evening;" then glancing around, said, "I have but a few words to say, and but little time; you once gave me food when I was well nigh starving, and I am not a man to forget. If you will follow me to-morrow morning, I will give you notice of where I and my party are now working in one of the creeks to the northward; we have made already, I should say, 1,000*l*." Turning on his heel, he quietly strolled away. I now recognized the man; it was the younger of the two whom I had fallen in with in the bush in my journey in quest of a run, and who now, in his own way, sought to repay the obligation he fancied he owed me. With beating heart, and quickened respiration, I sauntered along, not venturing to quicken my step for fear I had been watched, and I therefore took several turns to and fro until I had finished my pipe, when I returned. I quietly told my companions that we had better not begin another hole, as I thought it probable we should start, and drawing their heads together informed them of my adventure. "Verily there *is* gratitude in this world after all," quoth our sage M——.

We arranged that all our traps should be prepared as for a return (our gold having been despatched by

Digitized by Google

escort did not trouble us), and that, after getting under weigh, they should diverge in the direction I pointed out. We had taken out another set of picks, our old ones being completely done up, and next morning they busied themselves getting all things ready, whilst I mounted my horse, and with my dogs cantered down the back of the tent grounds, as I had more than once done before. I soon caught sight of my grateful bushranger ahead, and as I soon overtook him, I pulled my horse up to a walk, so that he might keep pace with me. He then told me that almost all the creeks around were, as I well knew, all crowded, but that some of them, from prejudice more than anything else, had been passed over. One near Forest Creek, amongst the rest, was in this category, and was not even named. He had discovered it by a mere chance, and his party were hard at work. He told me that the ground was rich, and as he was known as well as his party to be experienced, the sooner we made our appearance the better. I thanked him warmly for these hints; but he again said he considered he was only making me a fair return, for probably saving his life and his companion's when they were in the bush; bidding each good-bye, I galloped back and tethered my horse as though nothing had happened.

Towards evening we started, bidding all our acquaintances good-bye, and at once proceeded to our point of destination. It was clearly evident on our arrival that we were expected, and welcomed by all—

Digitized by Google

a proof that my informant had told them of the cause of his wishing to inform me, and of their approval of his conduct. Little time was lost in pitching our tent, and commencing operations. We soon found that considerable quantities of small gold were to be obtained from the soil, and whilst turn by turn we rocked the cradle, the others supplied earth; we found some rich pockets among a quantity of rubble stuff, among which was one nugget which weighed 3 lbs. 7 oz. 2 dwts., the heaviest piece we ever obtained.

For eleven days we were undisturbed; working without cessation, and reaping a golden crop; though not so much as our neighbours' party, who, indeed, seemed to have tied Fortune's wheel, now that they had reached the summit. At the end of the time mentioned, several arrivals took place; the absence of the party in question having excited attention and inquiry. A very considerable degree of astonishment was displayed at our presence, not unmingled, we could see, with a certain admiration of our skilful retreat, even though they themselves were the parties outgeneralled.

We remained a fortnight longer digging, and then, as our stock of dust and nuggets was very considerable, we resolved to start for Melbourne, square accounts, spend a few days, and return. By a little management we contrived to find good purchasers for all our traps and surplus stores; our two companions purchased a couple of good horses, saddles, &c., complete

Digitized by Google

for 14*l.* each; and carefully packing up our treasure, and ready to ride down anything in our way, in our eagerness to get to Melbourne, off we went at a pace which we soon found was too good to last in such roads as we were in.

We intended to have stopped at an inn which has been erected at Kyneton; in fact, there are several, but this one was recommended as having a civil landlord and attentive waiters. But as we soon found that paying for that civility and attention would ease us of a very great amount of our gold, we resolved to do as we had done often times before—be content with what we carried with us, and to camp out round a fire in our blankets. We did not bargain for musquitoes, but got them nevertheless, and in great quantities; though even that was better than paying at the rate of about an ounce of gold each for every meal we partook of. It was said that the innkeepers at the villages between the diggings and Melbourne were netting on an average from three to five thousand a year; and, from own knowledge, I can positively assert that many of the storekeepers have made pretty little fortunes and retired since the beginning of the mania for digging. At all the various diggings—Ballarat, Golden Point, Forest Creek, Friar's Creek, and a long list of creeks, gullies, &c.—one or more of these stores may be found, none of them making a less profit than one hundred per cent.; many of them getting more. In addition to this, the principal pay-

Digitized by Google

ments are in nuggets, for which these salesmen allow about 55*s*. to 58*s*. an ounce. This gold is remitted to Melbourne, where it readily sells for 62*s*. to 65*s*., sometimes even more; thus adding about twelve per cent. additional profit to their already enormous gains. Their risks, however, are great, and the arbitrary exaction of the government in demanding 30*s*. per month for every shopman, clerk, store-keeper, or other servant employed, although not making any very great abatement from their gains, is still forcibly felt, more especially as on some occasions where the servant has been seized by the police, and taken before the Commissioner, heavy losses have resulted from the man's absence. I have heard several of the principal store-keepers express their determination of commencing actions to recover damages from Government for these losses; and should any of these cases come before a jury, such is the almost universal feeling of dislike to the colonial measures, that the Government would surely lose the day.

We hurried on next day, and succeeded in reaching Melbourne; no very great journey for two days, as far as mere distance is concerned, but a considerable feat when shocking roads, broken-down drays or waggons, teams in confusion, dust, flies, musquitoes, and a host of petty annoyances and hindrances, are taken into consideration. Our companions conducted us straight to their home, insisting that we should stop with them whilst in Melbourne; laughingly telling us that a sofa, or even a soft deal board, would be a better

Digitized by Google

couch than a blanket and a heap of stones, with a big bit of quartz for a pillow.

We were warmly welcomed by the good lady and her family; and, as we could well imagine their first feelings would not bear the presence of strangers, we strolled out after our introduction, promising to return in an hour's time. There were at this time a very considerable number of diggers in the town, and we had gone but a very short distance before a volley of hails was to be heard from one of the upper windows of a large inn or hotel. On looking up, several of our acquaintances at Golden Point were to be seen, and *bongré malgré*, we had to walk up-stairs to say "How d'ye do?" A cheer greeted our entrance, chairs being ceremoniously placed for us by the waiters; though by the appearance of the room it was plain few of the present inmates cared for such a piece of furniture. Some seated on the table, some on the ground, and one half out of window, retailing all that passed for their "mates'" information and gratification. "What would we drink?" Nothing. Such a thing was not to be heard of. Sherry, madeira, champagne, brandy, anything or everything we may have; but as for nothing, it wasn't in the house, and could not be thought of.

Yes, indeed, there were shepherds, hut-keepers, shopmen, and errand-boys, drinking champagne at a guinea or a guinea and a half per bottle; though I will say for them, all seemed to prefer the brandy, and to understand it best. There are no gentlemen in the

Digitized by Google

colonies now. All barriers are broken down. There are only rich men and poor men; and as the latter may be rich in a week, every one is "hail-fellow, well met" with every one else.

Evading with some difficulty a pressing invitation to dinner, we at length contrived to get away, and as we learned from the conversation that was going on that many of our old neighbours were down in the town for the very laudable purpose of getting rid of their gold as fast as possible in debauchery and drunkenness, we thought it best to get back to our "mates" for the remainder of the day.

Oh! the pleasures of home! Many a happy hour had we spent in the bush, and at the gold fields, but the cosy quiet happiness of that snug home, the placid look of contentment which was upon the face of all, and the kind and fond looks which centred in our two friends, could not pass unnoticed, and almost made me feel inclined for tranquillity and retirement. The effect on our sage was soon evident; his attention to the younger daughter of our host being much greater than we considered three hours' acquaintance warranted. I told him so, whereat she blushed, and he looked angry and foolish; so H—— and I set him down as a gone man. The elder is engaged to our younger companion.

The next day we negotiated the sale of our gold, and obtained upwards of 3,900*l*. My share of the whole of the affair—one-fifth—being 1,473*l*.; for

Digitized by Google

rather more than five months' work; the last month's speculation having, however, yielded us more money in one-fourth the time that our first enterprise did. This proves how much chance has to do with digging; though I do not believe any single man, I mean working singly, could fail of making, one day with another, at least twenty shillings' worth of gold. This, mind you, is, in my opinion, the *minimum*; and a man must be *unlucky* who only does this. I am not speaking, of course, of a day only, or a dozen days even, but of three weeks or a month.

We had some time before this, at M——'s suggestion, determined upon dividing the money we possessed, and letting it stand in our respective names at the bank, and also upon making each his will, in case of accidents, and this we now proceeded to do. My share, and consequently each of the others', H—— and M——, was now, including our gold-seeking returns, 2,197*l.*; about seven times as much as we had when we landed in the colonies very nearly five years ago. Had the gold discovery not taken place we should have stood in almost as good a position, for by this time our herd would be yielding a large annual income, and from the care with which they had been selected, and the attention we paid to breeding, every year would have rendered them more and more valuable. I am very, very thankful for the success which to an almost unlooked-for degree has attended our exertions; still I am sorry we were obliged to give

Digitized by Google

up our pursuits, and I am resolved as soon as this fever subsides to commence again.

After finishing our business, we spent three days cruising about, admiring the vagaries of the gold miners, who had come to town. Their freaks and fancies are beyond description ludicrous. Nothing is too good—what do I say?—nothing is good enough for them! The costliest spirits, wines, and liqueurs; the best of everything in the shape of food; and as for dress, especially among the women kind, the excess is wonderful and laughable. Silks, satins, and laces, the most beautiful and costly shawls, and other precious stuffs, are seen upon the coarsest forms, and associated with the strangest companions, in the shape of shoes, stockings, and other vestments; sometimes even an absence of them may be observed, though a shawl of princely cost may be observed on the lady's shoulders! Many of the shopkeepers have made large sums by asking exorbitant prices for common but gaudy articles, which they have had in store; and as gay colours and a high price are the test of worth, the price is immediately paid, and the worthless trash is admired, worn, thrown by, and more bought.

Strange stories are told of the vagaries of the men; and I have been assured that several of them have *eaten the bank notes* which have been given them in payment for gold, the notes having been *asked for* for that purpose. I myself have seen them sitting "tossing" with each other for nuggets, or playing "blind

Digitized by Google

hookey," "all fours," or even, when cards where not procurable, "odd or even?" for their pieces of gold, the weight being guessed at nearly enough for their purpose.

The price of almost everything is, in consequence of these causes, extreme; and for many articles any price almost could be obtained. I have, on several occasions, been offered nuggets to the weight of eight or ten ounces for *one* of my pistols; and a man at the Creek offered me his day's earnings, worth about 60*l.*, for my double-barrelled gun. Beauty, also, had several admirers; and finding I would not sell him, one of the diggers attempted to steal him, much to my dog's disgust, and his own too; for Beauty's teeth met in his wrist, and would have stopped there, had not I run out, on hearing the uproar, and released the unfortunate culprit. This affair enhanced Master Beauty's value amazingly, but it also produced respect; and I had no further attempts upon any of my possessions, animate or inanimate.

After sojourning a few days in town, we started back for Forest Creek, to again try our fortune in the golden lottery. This time we did not take so great a variety of tools and stores; but, made wise by experience, selected only those we actually wanted. We had picked up a tent cheap, and, as before, rode, the dray carrying our traps. Carriage, however, was very high, and we had to pay 73*s.* per hundredweight. As, however, we knew that the driver was trustworthy,

Digitized by Google

we did not mind the expense; and as, of course, he would be longer on the road than ourselves, we allowed him to start a day before we did. Pushing on over the well-known roads, we stopped at one of the inns I mentioned before; not feeling altogether inclined to stop at the Creek until the drays arrived, so waited until we could arrive together.

After a brief space spent in a cruize for reconnoitring purposes, we pitched our tent, and, as before, commenced our operations. It seemed this time, however, that luck was dead against us. Morning, noon, and night, found us slaving at our posts, but the find was extremely small; the more especially as many of those at little distances were reaping immense sums. One party in particular, who had come over from Sydney, procuring, in about ten days, from two pits, no less than about ninety-three pounds of gold, principally in nuggets; and so abundantly was the search in general rewarded, that, on an average, a ton of the metal went down by each escort to Melbourne.

We changed and changed again; but were still comparatively unlucky. I say comparatively, as, though we were obtaining an average of two ounces each per diem, this was thought nothing of, the diggers being seldom contented with less than from 60*l.* to 70*l.* a week; and even this average, great as it is, is constantly and greatly exceeded, from 500*l.* to 1,000*l.* being a frequent week's work, and, in some instances, even a day's work!

Digitized by Google

We went back at last to old Golden Point, trying over again round our former haunts; and washing a considerable quantity of refuse, which had not been deemed worthy of attention: we thus obtained a considerable quantity of dust, and, by digging, we had added a considerable stock of lumps to the general store.

After nearly three months, it was resolved to strike work, and proceed home again, in order to make arrangements for a scheme we had been lately talking about. We disposed of the greater part of our traps, retaining one tent, which we knew we should need, and then down along home was the cry. Home we arrived safely, and at once proceeded to sell our stock of gold, which, when as before divided among us (all expenses being paid), gave us each 913*l.*, which, considering the heavy expenses of horse-keeping, and of our own proper expenses, was a very good return for our labour, though very much within what we had hoped, and, indeed, had a right to expect, from the results of other diggers' adventures.

We now set seriously to work about our scheme, and, as a preliminary, M—— married the younger daughter of our companion, the elder one being united to her fiancé at the same time. It was then agreed that M—— and his wife should proceed to the diggings, with authority to purchase gold on our account; the old man is to dispose of it in Melbourne; and H——, M——, and myself are to form the

Digitized by Google

medium of conveyance. We calculate that we have a capital of 15,000*l.* among us—that we can purchase gold at Mount Alexander, or Ballarat (to either of which places we shall go, according to the gold price quotations) at about 55*s.* to 57*s.* 6*d.* per ounce for cash, and that we can sell it in Melbourne for from 65*s.* to 70*s.* per ounce cash, our profit being, at the very least, 18*l.* to 15*l.* per cent, whilst they were more likely to reach 18*l.* to 20*l.* per cent., and this, too, not per annum, but per week. As a reasonable calculation, we consider we shall be able to pay every expense that may accrue—licenses, housekeeping, horsekeeping, travelling, &c.—and still lay by 100*l.* per cent. per annum. I shall, however, soon be able to tell you more about it, that is if I do not see your faces here before that to talk you verbally.

If you come out, bring coined money, sovereigns in preference; bills and bank notes have to be discounted, the former at very heavy rates—fifteen and twenty per cent. being not unusual.

There are endeavours being made to obtain the establishment of a mint (or mints, if possible), for the purpose of coining our gold, and thereby avoiding the enormous tax which we pay to the mother country in the shape of freight and difference of price; the excitement on the subject is very great, and the democratical party skilfully take advantage of these times of excitement to inculcate and spread abroad their peculiar notions. There is no doubt that the

Digitized by Google

statesmen at home know just as much of our wants and wishes, as they do of the man in the moon; and the governors whom they appoint are just as fit to be our rulers as King Stork or King Log in the fable. The whole system, both of franchise and representation, is founded in error, and the consequences cannot fail to partake of the nature of the source; and, in the way things are now going on, I feel perfectly sure that ere long the feelings of doubt and exasperation which have taken possession of the people, and which, as I have told you, are fanned and kept alive by demagogues, will burst forth against the Government; and anarchy will, I fear, be the result. A little consideration, a very slight exertion of common sense, would avert this, and conciliate the great mass of the Australian settlers; but no! the government measures are in the hands of a clique who will involve the social edifice in a blaze, which will surely ruin them and theirs; and, alas! the innocent will suffer as well as the guilty. Even now there is time for the *Imperial Parliament* to save these colonies from the *mad mismanagement* of the *colonial placemen*, but *this opportunity* neglected, *another* is *not* likely to be found.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

THE foregoing work shows the condition of the Victoria gold fields up to August 1852. Since that period much information of a useful character to the intending emigrant has accrued from various local sources, and from these the annexed particulars are selected with a view of giving the English reader a faithful insight into the difficulties he will have to encounter on arrival in the colony, as well as into the advantages which lie before him. With this as his guide, as accurate a knowledge of what the gold seeker may expect to find in addition to the precious metal, will be imparted, as it is possible to obtain without actual experience.

A FIELD FOR IMMIGRATION.

To men, able and willing to earn an honest living by the sweat of their brow, we need do little more than point to the elaborate details furnished from time to time, of the astonishing richness of the country, to enable them to form their own opinion as to the propriety of venturing to come amongst us. For their further guidance, we annex a few of the current rates of wages of working men, premising that when the term "rations" is mentioned, it means about ten pounds of beef or mutton, ten pounds of flour, a quarter of a pound of tea, and two pounds of sugar, weekly :—

Digitized by Google

Married couples (without family), per annum with rations	£50	to	60
Married couples (with family)	55	„	60
Shepherds, with rations, per annum	32	„	35
Hutkeepers, per annum	30	„	32
General useful servants, with rations, per ann.	40	„	50
Bullock drivers, with rations, per annum	..		50
Bullock drivers for the roads 3*l.* to 4*l.* per wk.			
Gardeners, per annum	40	„	50
Cooks, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 10*s.* per week, per annum	50	„	60
Bush carpenters, with rations	50	„	60
Stock-keepers	50	„	55
Grooms	50	„	60
Carpenters, per annum	..		60
Blacksmiths, per annum	60	„	70

General farm servants, weekly, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.*

Compositors, 1*s.* 9*d.* per thousand.

Pressmen, 4*l.* per week.

Shearers, 6*l.* per week, and rations.

Seamen, for London, 5*0l.* for the run home, or 10*l.* per month. Coasting, 5*l.* to 6*l.* for the run, or 7*l.* to 8*l.* per month.

Carpenters, stonemasons, blacksmiths, *&c.*, employed in the towns are receiving, without rations, from 18*s.* to 20*s.* per day.

Female Servants.

Thorough servants, per annum	£20	to	25
Housemaids, ditto	20	„	25
Laundresses, ditto	22	„	25
Nursemaids, ditto	15	„	20
Cooks, ditto	26	„	36
Nursery governesses or needlewomen	25	„	30

What the colony is in the most urgent need of, however, is female servants of an eligible character, and this want is the source of great annoyance in most families now resident here. The voluntary immigration to a gold country is naturally com-

Digitized by Google

posed of a very large proportion of males. Men have flocked here by tens of thousands, accompanied by but a very small comparative number of women and children, and as the first thought of a successful digger is generally to get married and provide himself a home, the small proportion of women amongst us is soon removed from the sphere of domestic service. Although, doubtless, many rash and foolish matches are made, it is to be hoped that the majority may turn out well; and, meantime, the splendour of a digger's wedding is something rather startling to ordinary people. Young Irish orphan girls, who scarcely knew the luxury of a shoe till they landed here, lavish money in white satin for their bridal dresses, at ten or twelve shillings a yard, and disdainfully decline the purchase of a shawl, because the poor shopkeepers do not happen to have got the article worth not less than ten guineas each.

Meantime the ladies of the colony have frequently to do their own work, from the impossibility of getting servants, or perhaps still worse, have to submit to the annoyance of combined sauciness and incompetency. This is in reality one of the principal annoyances of the colony, and one which is driving many respectable families away from it. How far it may suit the views of the young women of the working classes of Great Britain to endeavour to alleviate this distress, exposing themselves thereby to the very serious danger of having some day to dash down our main streets under a perfect cloud of white favours, as the newly-gained property of some lucky miner from "the Mount," we leave the amiable creatures to settle for themselves. No country can be permanently prosperous or happy without a due adjustment of the sexes; and upon patriotic principles alone, some of them will surely endeavour to come amongst us, even in defiance of the frightful danger we have alluded to.

A great drawback, next to the difficulty of obtaining servants, consists at present in the extreme scarcity of house accommodation, and its natural consequence, an extravagant rate of rental. Houses are in fact almost unattainable; and building materials and labour are so high, that there is no hope of the accommodation keeping any pace with the present astonishing rate of immigration. Two-roomed houses, even in narrow

Digitized by Google

dirty lanes, let readily at 14*s.* or 16*s.* per week; in front situations, from 20*s.* to 25*s.*; three-roomed cottages fetch almost 30*s.* to 40*s.*; four-roomed houses are worth 150*l.* to 200*l.* per annum; those still larger, from 300*l.* upwards, and so forth. Good shops and stores are worth almost anything that the owners like to ask for them; and the very high rates we have quoted seem likely to advance still further. As we see no immediate prospect of things improving in this respect, all persons who can afford to make such an arrangement should provide themselves, if possible, with wooden or iron houses, to put up on their arrival.

Intending immigrants of all classes will do well to bear all this in mind, that they may come prepared to submit patiently to the evils attendant upon the discovery of our gold fields. We now annex for their further information, a list of the present prices for a few of the principal articles of general consumption.

The rates we give are not those ordinarily figuring in commercial prices, but just the prices they would have to pay if going the usual round of shopping for the ordinary supply of their households. The 4 lb. loaf is 1*s.* 4*d.*; beef and mutton are 4*d.* per lb.; veal, 8*d.*; pork, 1*s.*; butter is about 2*s.* 6*d.*; cheese, 2*s.*; eggs, 5*s.* per dozen; tea, 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* per lb.; coffee, 1*s.* 4d.; sugar, 3*d.* to 4*d.*; loaf sugar, 7*d.*; ham and bacon, 2*s.*; candles, 8*d.*; soap, 4*d.* to 5*d.*; milk, 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* per quart; potatoes, 12*s.* per cwt.; coals, 5*l.* per ton; firewood, 4*l.* for a load that four bullocks will draw through bad roads; water, 6*s.* per load of about two hogsheads; hay, 14*l.* to 18*l.* per ton; and oats, 9*s.* to 10*s.* per bushel. Strangers will see, therefore, that they have rather a formidable list of prices to encounter, and they should weigh well their chance of an income to meet all this, before deciding to come amongst us.

There is one class especially which we would strongly urge to be cautious what they do. It is the very large class of clerks and shopmen, &c., with which all civilized countries seem strangely deluged. With this description of labour this market is constantly largely overstocked; and eager as is the demand for most kinds of labour, it is quite distressing to notice the

Digitized by Google

number of worthy young men, incapable of severe manual labour, who, with delicate health, and probably still more delicate purses, swarm our towns in search of employment, exposed to very heavy expenses which they can earn nothing to meet, and gradually sinking into poverty, and too often into dissipated habits, till they vanish somewhere, and make way for the constantly recurring supply. Such men have rarely been successful at the diggings; the demand for their labour in their accustomed pursuits is very limited in proportion to their numbers, and we distinctly warn them that in rashly throwing up good situations at home, and trying their luck here, they are guilty of an act that is little better than sheer insanity.

THE PERMANENCE OF THE GOLD FIELDS.

On this subject various opinions are entertained; some people boldly asserting that the very existence of these mines will be a matter of history in two or three years; and others, with equal confidence, pronouncing them inexhaustible. Our own impressions, formed upon a tolerably attentive study of the subject, and confirmed by constant intercourse with intelligent men of all classes who have visited or worked at the mines, are decidedly in favour of their continuance, and of their very considerable further development. The whole history of gold discovery in Australia seems to point to the almost unlimited extent of the gold fields of the continent, and in spite of all the activity engendered by the desirable nature of the object sought for, it seems unlikely that we have discovered as yet all the gold mines, or even the richest lands which the whole continent contains. Science has done little or nothing for us. Our processes in obtaining gold are of the rudest nature. The search is characterized almost solely by what the sailors well call "sheer strength and stupidity." From the very extended diffusion of gold throughout the country, it seems unlikely that the field will be exhausted within any reasonable time.

Events, we conceive, have shown that a vast belt of highly auriferous land extends across the continent from our own fields to those of Bathurst and its neighbourhood, and from thence to

Digitized by Google

the banks of the Hunter, and the back of Moreton Bay,—a belt of land of hundreds of miles in length, and of unknown width. This colony, in particular, seems to contain gold in every direction. It has been found at the Pyrenees, at the Wardy Yallock, at Ballarat, at the Clunes, at Mount Alexander, and Bendigo; at Anderson's Creek, sixteen miles from Melbourne, near Wanguratta, on the Ovens, at Mitta Mitta on the Murray; it has been found even in the streets of Melbourne itself.

Even while these lines are being written, news has arrived from Adelaide, announcing that an available gold field has been found within eighteen miles of that city. It is not, indeed, likely to prove equal to Mount Alexander, but it appears, upon competent authority, to be at all events remunerative.

Even supposing, then, that the days of rapid fortunes should pass by, and that, by some singular coincidence, ignorant men, in a hurried and desultory search, have stumbled upon all the large "nuggets," by which so many of them have been raised to competence in a day, we hold that there are sufficient indications of the almost universal diffusion of gold in this country, to justify a belief that an ample return will be attainable for years to come, by any man capable of hard work, and willing to exert himself with industry and steadiness.

OUR OTHER EXPORTS.

Next upon the list of matters interesting to people at home, we presume that we may place the article of wool. Recent advices have apprised us how large a proportion our production in that way bears to the great quantity of wool now absolutely required for the consumption of Great Britain; and of the anxiety betrayed by the manufacturers as to any delay in the arrival, or falling off in the quantity of an article, in the regular supply of which they are so immediately interested.

We are unable to supply details so authentic upon this, which was so lately our principal article of export, as we have done with regard to its new and formidable rival. As to the last clip, the people interested will be able ere this to form their own opinion. The next clip, the note of preparation for which is

Digitized by Google

even now sounding, is a matter of far more importance; and as to its actual fate, it would perhaps be hazardous to venture a distinct assertion. With wages at a very high rate, and the gold-fields, as well as all other employments, highly remunerative, the probability of all the flocks of the colony being properly shorn, and the fleece duly conveyed to market, is a matter upon which opinions differ. Our own belief is, that the shearing will be effected without much unusual delay or inconvenience. High wages will have to be given, probably; but with that drawback, most male labour is attainable, even despite the exaggerated prosperity of the colony. There is a large class of men here, who have been so accustomed to look for a little employment in shearing at its particular season, that it has become a sort of second nature with them—and between them and the squatters, anxious to get their sheep shorn at all hazards, there is little fear but that an arrangement will be made. The rate of wages will probably be high, but we fear that we do not overestimate the usual selfishness of trade, in believing that the English manufacturers will not take the heavy charges of the squatters very seriously to heart, provided only they eventually get the wool.

The carriage of this important article to market, particularly from the more distant stations, is a matter of more serious doubt. The rate of cartage of stores to the diggings, a distance of less than eighty miles, has lately averaged as high as 150*l.* per ton. English manufacturers can calculate for themselves how far wool at fourteen or fifteen pence a pound, can afford such a rate for transmission as this, if multiplied by the much greater distance of many of our grazing districts! It will be some consolation for them to learn, then, that this extravagant rate has arisen from the absolute necessity for the transmission of stores for the actual subsistence of men well able to pay high prices for them; and also from the terrible condition of the roads, never properly made, constantly wet from a severe winter, and cut up by an incessant traffic. As the season advances, the roads will mend, and the rate of carriage will eventually decline; and, in a matter in which our settlers are so seriously and personally interested as that of the conveyance of wool to the

Digitized by Google

market, we feel every assurance that, somehow or other, all difficulties will be overcome, and that the clip will be eventually shipped—not perhaps with perfect promptitude, or in the very highest condition—but the great bulk of it will be shipped, at last.

The effect of the gold discoveries of Australia upon the future production of wool is a matter of very serious consideration. The country is capable of producing a far larger quantity, if the land were divided and managed in a more intelligent and efficient manner. But there is little doubt that wages will rule high upon the average. They *may* reach a rate which the settlers cannot very well afford to pay. We do not think this likely, because in all large collections of men, great numbers are found who prefer an easy life with smaller remuneration, to severe labour well paid; and we think that a sufficient number of such men will be included in the very extensive immigration now setting in upon our shores, to supply a competent number of shepherds and hutkeepers for our settlers. But the very extensive desertion of these pursuits for the more profitable employment at the mines is even already producing a very serious effect in the propagation of disease—the scab now spreading with great rapidity in many districts, and its virulence being sadly aided by the necessity of running the sheep in very large flocks, and not paying proper attention to their folding grounds.

Another most important consideration is suggesting itself in reference to this subject, in the probable effect upon the wool of our sheep by the almost certainly increased value of the carcass. With population pouring in with unexampled rapidity, the question arises as to the capacity of our present stock of sheep and cattle being long able to supply the wants of the community for food; and any possible prospect of scarcity in that way must so materially affect the price of meat, that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the day may come when the value of the carcass may bear such a proportion to that of the fleece, that the latter may be nearly altogether neglected.

We may perhaps be allowed to hint at one very obvious mode of assisting the settlers to overcome their present and future

Digitized by Google

difficulties. An increase in the price of wool of sixpence, eightpence, or a shilling a pound, would enable them to do wonders in meeting a high rate of wages; and the hard-headed and intelligent manufacturers of England will do well to consider this view of the subject, and to make up their minds, if the Australian wool is in reality of importance to them, that a few extra pence per pound will be very far from thrown away.

Two things lend particular importance to the present subject, and they are well worthy the attention of those interested in the continued supply of Australian wool. One is the absurd and barbarous system of the present occupation of the Crown lands, which, amounting almost to a monopoly in favour of a few hundred squatters, produces the certain effects of all monopolies, waste and mismanagement, the sacrifice of the interests of a community to the benefit of a class, and the interruption of the natural progress of a country, capable, possibly, of being eventually made all that England herself is. The other evil is presented in the feeling of irritation excited in the minds of the rest of the community by the unreasonable nature of the demands of those gentlemen, in reference to their claims to the exclusive possession of the lands, and the unscrupulous means adopted for the accomplishment of their object. If measures be not taken to relieve them from their present position of antagonism to the great bulk of the people, we fear the result will be that, instead of being assisted in their pursuits, it will become a sort of religion upon the part of the colonists so to hamper and oppose them, as eventually to do away with them as mere nuisances, whose obstructiveness and want of adaptation to the altered condition of the times, render their very existence incompatible with the welfare of the colony.

Of the minor articles of export we have little to say. The increased value of stock for slaughter will almost entirely do away with the boiling-down system, and the further export of tallow will most probably be very trifling indeed. As for hides and horns, and bark and bones, &c.—if our mercantile friends at home expect much attention to be paid to "such small deer," by a people standing up to their ankles in gold, we think that they will be likely to find themselves grievously disappointed.

Digitized by Google

THE CROP.

The great drain upon the labour market, and the profitable use of working cattle in conveying stores to the diggings, have prevented very much of the land in this colony from being put under crop. And again, the extravagant rates of fodder—hay being frequently higher in price than brown sugar—have caused attention to these articles, to the prejudice of the growth of wheat. As the only other great granaries of these seas, Van Diemen's Land and South Australia, have also parted with a vast mass of their labouring population, we fear that the quantity of bread-stuffs which they will be able to supply will fall very far short of our absolute wants. The Sydney district, even in favourable seasons, cannot supply itself, and therefore we believe that very large importations of flour will be requisite. A few desultory speculations of the Americans to Sydney have turned out rather unfavourably, which may indispose even the enterprising Yankees to further ventures; but we hold a strong opinion, that we shall be willing purchasers of this great article of food, occasionally at very profitable rates indeed.

OUR SOCIAL CONDITION.

Deeply interested as we are in the welfare of the colony, and naturally tenacious of its character, it is with the most sincere sorrow that we confess that its present condition, in a social point of view, is almost as bad as it well can be.

Apart from the natural effects of a rich gold-country, in drawing together a population of at least a very *adventurous* character, our near neighbourhood to the island into which Great Britain so recklessly persists in pouring the criminals from her crowded jails, has very seriously affected the composition of our community. From this source many thousands of the greatest wretches alive have reached our shores, and the tone thereby imparted to our society is one which every good citizen must deplore. Added to this, a negligent, feeble, and incompetent Government has, by its laxity its parsimony, and its absolute

Digitized by Google

imbecility, so complicated and fomented the evils around us, that the social constitution of the colony is in the most wretched condition. Crimes of the most fearful character and degree abound on all sides; the roads swarm with bushrangers; the streets with burglars and desperadoes of every kind. In broad daylight, and in our most public streets, men have been knocked down, ill-used, and robbed; and shops have been invaded by armed ruffians, who have "stuck up" the inmates, and rifled the premises, even situated in crowded thoroughfares. At night, men dare not walk the streets, and thieves appear to be so thick upon the ground, and to be so unceasing in their operations, that we feel certain they must often rob each other. Murders of the most frightful character have become so numerous that they scarcely excite attention for a day, and such is the inefficiency of our police system, that scarcely since the foundation of the colony has any one perpetrator of premeditated murder been brought to justice. The police are cowed, or leagued with the actors in the outrages; witnesses and prosecutors are bribed, or intimidated from appearing; the administration of the law is fast sinking into contempt; case after case is so confused with perjury and cross-swearing, that the facts are entirely hidden; jurors are so scared with the condition of things around, that they are only too eager to return unfavourable verdicts, but this disposition is so complicated by the gross incapacity of one at least of the principal law officers of the Crown, that the results are most disastrous. It is a shocking thing to say it, but we really believe that in many of the cases adjudicated upon in our criminal courts, what with perjury, the absence of witnesses, the fears of panic-stricken jurors, and the blunders of those who conduct the prosecutions, no more substantial justice is administered than would be the fact if cases were left to the chance decision of a "toss up." We have all the evils of Lynch law without its vigour and its promptitude; and a very considerable portion of the community makes no ceremony of advocating the introduction of that barbarous and sanguinary practice.

This is doubtless a painful picture. It is, alas! too true a one: we wish that we could soften its tints, or colour it a little

Digitized by Google

more brightly. But we have shown the advantages of the colony; we cannot honestly suppress its evils. We write to *inform*, not to *mislead*; and whatever the aspect of the colony, our duty at present is simply to describe it.

THE STEAMERS.

The commencement of steam communication — the event so anxiously looked for by the colonies as so advantageous to both countries — has not been very auspicious. Five steamers have arrived up to the present time, and none of them have achieved a passage much superior to that of many sailing vessels. The *Australian* and the *Sydney* were the worst cases: judging from these specimens, we are not disposed to augur much for the Australian Steam Navigation Company's enterprise. The *Chusan* and the *Formosa* were better, but not equal to what we should expect from the splendid fleet under the control of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. The *Great Britain* made a passage of eighty-three days; but probably she would have distanced all her rivals by some days had it not been for a mistake about the coals. We hope very soon to witness the results to be attained by the Panama route; but meantime we beg to impress upon the proprietors of steamers to Australia, that they may just as well send out sailing-vessels if the steamers cannot make passages of about sixty to seventy days. The prolonged passage of the *Sydney* was a positive evil of great magnitude; it detained the mails needlessly, confused commercial transactions, and caused very great anxiety.

INTERCOLONIAL TRAFFIC.

In connection with this subject, we may mention that an immense increase in intercolonial traffic has caused a corresponding rise in the value of steam-vessels for the trade. A striking instance recently occurred. The *Clarence*, a small steamer, built in England for the Australian colonies, was sold

Digitized by Google

for 29,950*l.*; while her first cost, including the expense of bringing her out, was about 13,000*l.* She is the property of a company in Van Diemen's Land, and runs between this port and Launceston. Another instance was the *Keera;* she cost about 6,000*l.* in England not many months since, and was sold the other day for 10,500*l.* These facts speak for themselves as to the profits made upon the exportation of steamers, and the rate of remuneration at which they can be worked.

FINANCIAL.

The financial prosperity of the colony is evidenced by the fact that the revenue for the past September quarter amounted to 462,340*l.* 1*s.* 5*d.*, while in the corresponding quarter of the previous year it was only 53,194*l.* 6*s.* 1*d.* Land was sold during the quarter to the value of 267,754*l.* 4*s.* 10*d.* The gold licenses yielded 109,795*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.*, besides 10,897*l.* 4*s.* 11*d.* for escort fees. The Customs' duties alone realized 55,378*l.* 8*s.* 10*d.*

On the other hand the public expenditure has enormously increased. The estimates for next year have just been laid before the Legislative Council. The ways and means are set down at 1,733,600*l.*, the expenditure at 1,749,042*l.* Of this latter sum not less than 412,715*l.* is for the police establishments; 94,449*l.* for penal establishments; the administration of justice, 42,280*l.*; military, 67,489*l.*: making a total of 616,933*l.* to be spent in protecting life and property, and repressing crime. That such a sum should be deemed necessary for the purpose in so limited a community, is sufficiently significant of the blessings to be reaped from close proximity to a penal colony.

THE YIELD OF WOOL.

All recent advices agree in showing the extreme anxiety that is felt among the woollen manufacturers of Great Britain with respect to the probable effect of the gold discovery upon

Digitized by Google

our yield of wool. We are happy, therefore, to be able to report so far favourably of the matter as to state that the shearing is proceeding with its usual regularity—that the settlers find no difficulty in securing the services of an adequate number of men, both for washing and removing the fleece—and that there is every reasonable probability of the wool being conveyed to the ports for shipment without any very ruinous expense or any very serious delay. The rate of wages for washing, shearing, &c., is, of course, higher than usual; but, as stated in a previous English summary, there has grown up throughout these colonies a large class of men who have become so accustomed to take the shearing, reaping, &c., at the proper seasons, that the labour-market must reach a very peculiar condition indeed before either the wool or the cereal crops are likely to go ungathered altogether.

While upon this subject, however, we must remark briefly upon the fact of the last intelligence from the wool-markets of Great Britain being of a very unsatisfactory nature as regards the prices realized, the rates for most descriptions of wool ruling some pence per pound lower than previous quotations. It must be obvious to all that this affords but very poor encouragement to Australian settlers to meet a high rate of wages, the difficulties of contending with disease, and of getting up and forwarding their wool in first-rate style. We have before warned those interested in this important trade, and we now warn them again most emphatically, that there is a process going on which has a most marked tendency to lead to the deterioration of our beautiful Australian wools. The rapid influx of population, all immediately becoming large consumers of animal food, and able to pay handsomely for it, must, at no distant date, lead to such a predominance of the value of the carcass, in proportion to that of the fleece, as to cause the latter to be comparatively neglected.

If, then, the British manufacturer really values the fine wools of this continent, it will be necessary that he should show his appreciation of them by affording the only legitimate encouragement in his power. If he pays such a price as will still keep the fleece to its proper relative position to the carcass,

Digitized by Google

the filling up of the country will increase our export of wool without much deteriorating either its quality or condition. But if he allows the price to sink again and again, till it becomes scarcely worth consideration in these golden times, it must be evident to all that the sheep will be reared almost solely with a view to a supply of food, the fine wools of Australia will become as matter of history, and Great Britain will have to seek in other countries a supply of raw material for one of her principal manufactures.

GEOLOGY OF THE VICTORIA GOLD FIELDS.

EXTRACT FROM A DESPATCH FROM LIEUT.-GOVERNOR LATROBE.

I present the following report for the information of her Majesty's Government.

In the case of the workings at Anderson's Creek, sixteen miles from Melbourne, though the ground was placed at the close of August under the direct supervision of the Crown Commissioner of the county of Bourke, and no person allowed to continue the search for gold without permission, it was evident that the constant rains and floods interposed such obstacles in the way of the work attempted to be carried on in the bed of a watercourse, as to render any steady gain out of the question; and subsequent events, to be presently referred to, have caused the almost entire temporary abandonment of the ground.

The workings at Clunes, ninety miles from Melbourne, on one of the head waters of the West Loddon river, were more perseveringly carried on for a time, during the latter part of August and beginning of September. The people congregated there were subjected to the occasional oversight of an officer of Government, and surveillance of a small detachment of the native police-force, with the full understanding that licenses must be taken out as soon as the proper officer was in a position to come upon the ground, and carry out the regulations. But before this could be done, they also were suddenly deserted not from any real unproductiveness, but from the discovery,

Digitized by Google

within a distance of thirty miles, of the new gold-field, to which I now turn.

A personal visit and inspection of the ground, from which I returned a few days ago, has been of great use to me in forming a judgment of the real state of the case.

The locality now known by the name of the Ballarat diggings lies about six miles in a direct line from the remarkable volcanic hill still known by the native name of Boninyong, and to the west of Warreneep, another eminence of similar origin, rising on the same ridge or water-shed. The geological formation of the country would appear to be the ordinary quartz ore, iron, sandstone, and clay slate, which is so general throughout this colony. Golden Point, where the principal workings at Ballarat have been opened, presents, superficially, no feature to distinguish it from any other of the numerous forested spurs which descend from the broken ranges at the foot of the higher ridges, and which bound the valley of the Leigh on either side. Yet although it is now seen that the gold is to be found in one position or another, in greater or less quantities, in the whole of the surrounding country, both on the ranges, or in the flats, or in the watercourses, various causes would seem to have given this particular point a superficial structure at least very distinct from others in its neighbourhood as far as they have been examined, and have made it the depository of a far greater quantity of the precious metal, within a limited area, than has hitherto been discovered. This particular structure, as far as it is now disclosed, would appear to be confined to the lower, and especially the northern and north-eastern portions of the extreme slopes and extremities of the spur. Roughly stated, a section of a working shows, under the superficial soil:—

1. Red ferruginous earth and gravel.
2. Streaked yellowish and red clay.
3. Quartz gravels of moderate size.
4. Large quartz pebbles and boulders; masses of ironstone, set in very compact clay, hard to work.
5. Blue and white clay.
6. Pipe clay.

Digitized by Google

Below which none of the workings have as yet been carried. Yet although such may be the general order of the strata, nothing is more striking than the irregularity of the proportions in which they are found to be distributed, the variety of inclination observable within a limited space, or the unequal depth at which any given stratum may be found to lie below the surface. In some workings the pipe-clay may be reached at the depth of ten or twelve feet; in others, not at thirty or upwards. In fact, there are hardly two workings, however approximate, which furnish similar sections. Gold has been detected, I believe, in all the superior formations, even in the superficial soil. But by far the richest deposit is found in the small veins of blue clay, which lie almost above the so-called "pipe-clay," in which no trace of the ore has been discovered. The ore is, to all appearance, quite pure. It is found occasionally in rolled or waterworn irregular lumps, of various sizes, from a quarter or half an ounce to one or two ounces in weight, sometimes incorporated with round pebbles of quartz, which appears to have formed its original matrix; at other times, without any admixture whatever, in irregular rounded or smooth pieces, and again in fused, irregular masses of pure metal of great beauty, weighing, in some instances, seven or nine ounces. It is also found combined with quartz pebbles or gravel of various sizes, evidently united to them while in a fused state, and on the surface of the detached masses of iron sandstone, but in the greatest abundance in the clays, from which it is washed in the form of rounded or flattened grains, like sifted gravel and sand of varied sizes. These will, however, be frequently seen to be interspersed with larger pieces, either pure or combined with quartz, as before described.

I have met with no instances in this locality of the form commonly called "scale gold." The seams of the auriferous blue clay, the general position of which I have described, are found to be most irregular in their deposit, and seldom more than four or five inches in thickness. They appear, disappear, and break off, and thin out, continually. The closest proximity to a rich vein in an adjacent working can afford no certain assurance that the labour of the adventurer will be similarly re-

Digitized by Google

warded. I may give your lordship some idea of the value of this partial deposit, however, when hit upon, by stating that I witnessed, during my visit, the washing of two tin dishes of this clay, of about twenty inches in diameter, the yield of which was no less than eight pounds' weight of pure gold; and I have seen two or at most three cubic inches of the same yield four ounces.

MELBOURNE AS I SAW IT.

BY A SYDNEY VISITOR.

On arriving at Williamstown, the first thing which attracts the eye is the immense amount of shipping anchored in the harbour, most of which, from the disordered state of the rigging, you at once perceive have been laid up from some cause for a length of time; and upon inquiry you are informed that many of the fine fleet before you have been there for nearly the past twelvemonth for want of hands. "All gone to the diggings, sir," said our informant. "See that saucy little bark there; her captain gave the men leave to go four months ago, and now he has advertised for them to come back—but don't he wish he may get them!" Of vessels so circumstanced there cannot be fewer than from fifty to sixty, notwithstanding that the enormous figure of from 60*l.* to 70*l.* is freely offered to seamen for the run home.

The city itself, though well laid out, is in the most wretched condition as regards all sanitary regulations, and as regards what is of still more immediate consequence to its inhabitants —protection for life and property. The rains, which have not yet ceased for the season, continue to pour down in incessant torrents, covering all the flat and marshy ground around the city, and within it it is no exaggeration to say that the streets are like so many rivers of mud, and in many instances knee-deep. So deep and so dirty are the streets, that one out of every three pedestrians you meet in the course of the day, has his nether man encased in a pair of huge leather boots—no other way of getting along with safety being available. The corporation of Sydney may be blamed, and perhaps justly, in

Digitized by Google

many instances, for neglect of duty; but those who so severely take them to task, ought to come to Melbourne, the golden city, and take a lesson from the careless and inefficient manner in which the city council of that city performs its functions. Add to the filthy state of the streets just mentioned, the fact that there is no gas in the town, nor is there the slightest attempt made to light it in any way, and that water for culinary purposes is so dear as to become an article of luxury rather than of use, and you will be able to form some slight idea of the sanitary condition of this beau ideal city.

Before forming your opinion, however, there is yet another ingredient in its social condition to be considered, namely, that there is not household accommodation for one-third of its present occupants. I have seen instances of over-crowding in sleeping apartments since I came here, that were it to occur in any other country in the world would breed almost instant fever. It is no rare thing to see twenty stout and stalwart men each requiring as much air for the proper inflation of his lungs as an ox, stretched upon the floor of a close, confined, *unventilated* room, night after night, and for this precious accommodation various prices are charged, from one-and-sixpence to half-a-crown. When I saw this crowd, I could not help thinking that the Yankee plan on such an emergency would answer admirably. It was to lay the first batch down on the floor till they got asleep, and then "stand them up on end" against the wall, and lay down another set, and so on, till the room might be as well packed as the Egyptian Necropolis. Nor in this respect are what may be termed respectable taverns much better. I know an instance where four men were sleeping in one room, in a respectable hotel, and were all thrown into dirty sheets, handed on the first morning of their sojourn, dirty, nay, filthy towels; and after the lapse of four days, I happened to meet with one of the party, and making inquiry as to whether there had been any reform in the toilet department, "No," said he, "the same nasty things are there yet. We asked for a change, but were told that if we did not like them we might change our quarters, and so we are just as before." Change their quarters, indeed! well did Mr. Boniface know that that was impossible.

Digitized by Google

The charge for this accommodation is 2*s.* 6*d.* per night per man; 2*s.* 6*d.* per man for a miserable excuse for a breakfast; 3*s.* for a dinner, in which beef and mutton are made to ring the changes alternately; and 2*s.* 6*d.* for tea—and oh, ye gods! such a tea. Civility is so scarce an article in the market, that it is unquotable. Private lodgings are still more difficult to be obtained, and that, too, at the modest figure of 30*s.* per week for accommodations that few would think of offering in your city. The houses in general are but half finished, and when they are crammed full, sometimes as many as four families in a small box of a place not sufficient to accommodate a fourth of the people thrust into it, you may conceive how disagreeably situated the whole are. I have been in many places, and have seen the over-crowded lodging-houses in almost all the emigrating ports of Great Britain; but all that I have ever beheld in that way falls short of a tithe of what I have seen since I came to Melbourne; and yet the cry is still they come, "not in single files but in battalions."

This alarming state of things has at length aroused the attention of Government, and caused them to advertise for tenders for the construction of wooden sheds for the reception of the immense masses of emigrants expected here in the course of the spring, but whether they will find workmen enough to forego the chances of gold-digging to construct them is at present problematic. Another matter which the Legislative Council has taken up to remedy the evils arising from this state of things, is the relaxation of the Act in reference to the building of weatherboard houses within the city. If this had been done at an earlier date, much hardship, misery, and human suffering would have been arrested: for I can assure you that with all the outward prosperity, the flowing wealth, and the profuse expenditure of money which goes on here, there are many, very many cases of hapless and unfortunate destitution. Many a person has come here with a high heart, a stout arm, and a light purse, and although the demand for labour is abundant, still, before he could procure that suitable to his capacity, instances not few nor rare have occurred wherein the lightness of his purse brought him to destitution in a place where every

Digitized by Google

necessary of life is sold at almost famine prices. I particularly warn your readers against coming here slightly provided for, in a pecuniary point of view, for should they stop here long, they will find that it is no such easy matter to live, or even subsist, in this place.

The moral condition of the population is (I mean of the masses) deplorably low. Proceed where you will, oaths, execrations, and obscenity grate upon your ear. Every public-house—and the name is legion—from early morning till evening (no respectable people are out after nightfall), resounds with brawl and indecency. Intoxication seems to have run riot among the lower orders; and so far from that gold, which they all seem to have in profusion, being attended with a blessing, I verily believe that to many it will be a bitter curse. I have no means of estimating how much money is spent daily in this way; but when I inform you that no man can open his mouth, and swallow anything, even a glass of "colonial," in a public-house, under sixpence, and when I state that I believe there are at least 5,000 habitual drunkards within the city, not to speak of the "moderate" men, it will be seen that the amount of gold dust thus disposed of must be enormous.

Crime of a more heinous dye is just as prevalent as drunkenness. No man having even the appearance of respectability can go abroad in the unlighted, unswept, and filthy streets without running the risk of being "bailed up," as the slang phrase goes; and should the victim of these marauders make resistance, or, what is worse, should he prove a "blank," and no plunder be found upon him, woe betide the unlucky wight for daring to be abroad without his pockets being well lined to satisfy these gentlemen of the road, whose depredations are rendered of easy performance in consequence of the laxity of the police force, if a force it can be called.

Some people here go so far as to assert that these ruffians and the custodians of the law and the property of the people, are in league, with what grounds I cannot say; but certain I am, that were it so, they could not more effectually assist the "pro-prig" fraternity than they at present do. It is proverbial, that a policeman is never to be found when wanted; but in

Digitized by Google

Melbourne, it is said, that you had better want a policeman than find one; for, in the former case, you may protect yourself, whilst in the event of calling for, and finding, one of the Blues, you are very likely to find a confederate robber. The performances of these gentlemen are not just confined to the mere practice of "bailing-up," though that forms a very lucrative portion of their trade, for burglaries and highway robberies are becoming more frequent than ever. I may mention one incident, slight in itself, but calculated to show how audaciously these gentry pursue their avocation. A few evenings since, I was at the house of a friend of that peace-loving class called Quakers, and several other gentlemen were there besides, when we were all at once startled by a heavy rap at the door. Our host and "friend" immediately opened it, when a herculean savage thrust a great bullet-head inside, and, in the most insolent tones, demanded either money or a night's lodging. Friend John expostulated; but, being rather diminutive in stature, the intruder paid but little attention to him until he perceived the company, when he retired grumbling and swearing, "what, though he was a Government man, he had as good a right to summut as any other." It is generally believed here that the parties who are the ringleaders, at least, of those vagabonds are those gentlemen whom Earl Grey so pathetically describes as bearing favourable comparison with the free emigrants who have come here; and should the bill now before the Council for stopping the aforesaid class of scoundrels from infesting these shores prove ineffectual, I understand that it is the intention of the citizens to form themselves into a sort of volunteer watchguard for the protection of life and property. In fact, if the present disorganized state of society continues much longer, some such proceeding will be absolutely necessary, as Government seems to pay no heed whatever to the matter. They are, I am given to understand, too busy with schemes for the aggrandizement of their partizans and supporters to heed the welfare of the community.

The advance of Melbourne, in a commercial point of view, is surprisingly rapid, and so far her prosperity seems to be based on a safe monetary foundation. The business part of the city

Digitized by Google

is crowded each day by an anxious throng, mostly parties preparing for, or returning from, the diggings. The physique of these different lots is quite amusing to contemplate. In one lot you will see the lately arrived "new chum," with his carefully cultivated moustache, raised on the voyage, a la Bond-street, his leathern overalls, his fancy stick, and his "swag" done up in Macintosh. In another you may behold the "old hand," the wary old file who has campaigned it at the Turon, at Braidwood, and at the Mount, and who is now preparing for a trip to the Bendigo, but who declares that there is no use going till the roads are open. With him there is none of your finery. A pair of stout boots, a blanket, and the everlasting "hook-pot," complete his equipment. Anon you enter a gold-buyer's shop, and perceive a party disposing of the proceeds of their adventure. One party of three that I saw the other day, had 145 pounds weight to dispose of. Another, a sailor lad, had 28 lbs., the produce of three months' work at the Bendigo. Such instances are of no rare occurrence; in short, they are rather the rule than the exception.

Whilst I have said so much about the immorality of the place, it is but fair to state that my remarks apply only to a certain class, who are, as it were, beyond the pale of society, but whose conduct exercises a pernicious influence upon the whole social system. I have been to most of the churches on sabbath, and I was pleased to find all of them well filled with respectable and attentive congregations. Indeed, in one particular, it may be said that the clergy are reaping a golden harvest from the diggings themselves. I allude to the demand which there is for their services in that ceremony which binds the sexes together "for better for worse" through life. And let me inform you that a digger's marriage here is no every day affair, though they be on each successive Sunday "thick as leaves in Vallambrosa." The turn-out on all occasions is spicy. I have seen even the wheels of the vehicles (six in number) adorned with rosettes of love ribbons; the Jarvey and the horse covered with white so profusely that at a distance they might pass for a small locomotive pyramid of snow. And such dresses as are worn by the brides and bridesmaids—such silks, such

Digitized by Google

satins, orange blossoms, and all the paraphernalia requisite and necessary to adorn the sacrifice which the blooming fair one is about to make of her precious self to John Snobs, the fortunate gold-digger, but now the doubly fortunate Snobs.

Sometimes you will see an attempt to ape the genteel in a style that is truly ridiculous. The Scotch have a proverb to the effect that "butter will come through the brose," and, in these instances, everything might pass off unnoticed, and the world be cheated into the belief that the parties were not of the mere mob, but for some such unlucky circumstance as the "happy man" enjoying the blast of the "dudeen," or, as it is more familiarly called, "blowing a cloud," amidst the finery which for the nonce surround him. On last Sunday, a genius of this kidney walked straight to the church, pipe in his teeth, and never remembered the circumstance till admonished at the altar by the clergymen on the levity of his conduct. Rings, pins, watches, and ornaments of all kinds, are greatly in requisition by this class, most of whom, like the famous boys of Kilkenny, in the olden time, "are stout roving blades," and spend their money freely, when they get into company with "pretty young maids." It is at the circus and in the theatre, however, that the fortunate gold digger is seen to full advantage. In days gone by, when T. P. Cooke used to do the sailor, to the unbounded admiration of every true British tar, Jack used, on such occasions, to demonstrate his own foolishness and the strength of his pocket at the same time; but it was reserved for the Melbourne miner to cap the climax of absurdity in this respect. It is not enough for him to give eight or ten shillings for a seat, and to shout his applause as loud as any other donkey, but he needs must mark his approbation of the veriest stuff that ever was ranted from a stage, by the more substantial tokens of crowns, half-crowns, and sovereigns, thrown on the stage to their particular favourites.

Digitized by Google

DESCRIPTION OF MELBOURNE.

BY A GOLD-SEEKER.

Although the scenery in the neighbourhood of the capital of Victoria can lay claim to but little pretension of what Dr. Syntax left his home in search of, still there are many pleasant spots in its vicinity where one given to rambling may spend a quiet afternoon, and where "ye manners and ye customs of ye people" may be learned as clearly as if you mingled in all their everyday avocations. I do not remember who it was that said that a London shopkeeper was only to be known when he got rid of the smoke on a Sunday; and verily I believe the remark applies with great truthfulness to the shopocracy of Melbourne, as well as to those of the insignificant village on the banks of the Thames. Amongst the most popular places of resort, or as they are facetiously styled by some, Sabbath recreation, are St. Kilda, and Liardet's Beach, both situated on the margin of the noble bay, nearly opposite Williams Town. Although Melbourne possesses a tolerably fair steam fleet, in the shape of various tug boats, belonging chiefly to Captain Cole, not one of these vessels is allowed to ply on Sunday; and hence, as may be supposed, there is, upon one day in the week at least, a very great demand for horseflesh. In fact, the horse-market—I mean the bazaars and livery stables—upon a Sunday morning, presents quite an animated spectacle, for here almost every masculine biped of the *genus homo* considers it his peculiar privilege to mount his horse on Sunday, without, be it remembered, the smallest reference to the fact as to whether he can ride or not; and permit me to say that sundry jokes have been cracked at sailors on horseback, but were the perpetrators to see a lot of diggers and shopmen in Melbourne mounted on their Rosinantes, henceforth and for ever they would hold their peace. Scenes the most laughable occur, yet all seems to be in good part. The fellows have come out to enjoy themselves, and are not to be put out of humour by trifles.

St. Kilda lies about three miles from Melbourne, on the south side of the Yarra, and as there is no highway, except the usual

Digitized by Google

bush ruts, after the Prince's Bridge is crossed, the walk or ride, which you please, is very pleasant. Arrived at the village, you are somewhat surprised at the appearance of rapid growth which everything indicates. Houses (wooden of course) are in course of construction—some nearly finished, others but commenced—and yet so eager are the people for house accommodation, that the shingles are scarcely on the roofs before they are tenanted. At St. Kilda there is a very fine hotel, at which I can assure you they charge very fine prices; but then, Lord bless you, in the "go-a-head city," as Melbourne is now called, who cares for a handful of silver? I was much pleased to observe here a taste more generally diffused for the cultivation of flowers than is to be found generally about Melbourne. I like to see those pretty little plots of ground, in front of dwelling-houses, neatly and carefully cultivated, as to my mind it gives stronger evidence of the comfort of the "people within," than almost any other circumstance, barrin' a balance at your banker's, which can be named.

The ramble from St. Kilda to Liardet's Beach, by the margin of the wide and noble bay, a distance of about two miles, is both healthful and agreeable — not that the scenery of the bay is of such a description as to call forth many encomiums from the tourist, for beyond the broad expanse of water, dotted, nay, closely studded with shipping at anchor, there is nothing to relieve the dull monotony of the place. At Liardet's, however, the scene changes, and from the shore and your own reflections (that is, if you be like the parson's horse, of a reflective turn of mind) you are once more aroused by the din of human voices. Here they are again—shopkeepers, shopmen, diggers, ladies, diggers' wives, horses, hackney carriages, shandys, gigs, and almost every possible and sometimes very questionable modes of conveyance, all congregated on the sand. Pedestrians wandering, promenading, flirting, drinking, laughing, talking on the pier, and in the shade of the cool verandahs, pic-nics in the scrub, mirth and merriment everywhere; boatmen lustily bawling for passengers, and waiters for more drink at the bar of the hotel. Tents are pitched upon all the ground surrounding this house of entertainment, wherein many a new chum for the

Digitized by Google

first time indulges in a glass of ale, and when he has paid sixpence and swallowed his swankey, declared upon his honour and soul that "It is not half so good as Burton or Alton." A good deal of novelty is added to this scene by the constant transit to and from a large ship, the *Duke of Bedford*, which is here moored off the pier, and turned into a model lodging-house. "Bed and board, sir," said our conductors on board, the other day, "for two pounds a week; delightful marine residence and boatage found into the bargain." Decidedly the accommodations are excellent, and the worthy proprietor, I was informed, keeps a good table. I need scarcely say, that his apartments are full; and it would be well if a few more of the dozens upon dozens of idle ships now lying in harbour were turned to an equally useful and profitable account to their owners. I was a good deal surprised to find amidst all the recreations of all classes and all kinds who visit the beach upon Sunday so little riot or intoxication. That an immense amount of liquor is drunk there is no doubt; but still, except upon the arrival of a lot of "new chums," with more money than sense, you will hardly observe any riot or drunkenness. Noise there is—Babel itself could not be worse, but still there is order.

The road from the beach to town lies through a low, marshy scrub, which presents not one single pleasing feature, except, indeed, we were to diverge at the Emerald Hill, and take a look in at the encampment. This encampment, it will be observed at a glance, consists but of the tents of gold-diggers *in transitu* to the Mount or elsewhere. You are scarcely on the hill till that fact becomes painfully apparent. There are the coverings erected by poor new-comers to shelter themselves from the heavens, and to make a temporary but safe refuge for themselves, their luggage, and their families. And oh! such squalor, such misery, and such a ground for imbibing the seeds of diseases, which may never again be eradicated from the system! It is pitiable to see well-dressed and genteelly reared females, young and tender infants as well as grown-up persons, crouching, and squatting in those miserable wigwams, of which a North American Indian would be ashamed. But what can the creatures do? I do not like to particularize, but a few days

Digitized by Google

since I dropped upon an old friend, one who at home was wont to have and to enjoy the comforts of life and polished society, and never shall I forget the mute but expressive look of abject desolation with which he brought me in to see Mrs. S——— and the two children. "This is different from what the humbug lecturers and paid philanthropists at home led us to believe," said he. And so it was. I asked if he had got a situation. "Yes," said he, "I have; but what of that? I get 4*l.* a week, but cannot get a two-roomed hovel to put them into (pointing with affection to his family), for less than 2*l.* 10*s.*, and what with bread at 7½*d.* per lb., beef at 6*d.* and 7*d.*, wood at 3*l.* 10*s.*, and water at God knows how much—do you think it possible we could subsist on 30*s.* per week?" I could remain no longer, so shaking my friend by the hand, bade him be of good cheer, and departed.

The botanic garden is another favourite resort for the Melbournites upon Sunday: but its visitors are of a different class. This is the ground where half the "matches" which grace our churches daily are contracted; here it is that newly-married husbands display to wondering swains their lovely (?) and loving (?) brides—at least during the honeymoon it is so. The collection of flowers is not of the best description, being rather too gaudy and too common for such a place; but if they be gaudy there is some excuse to be found for the curator, in the circumstance that he is naturally driven to compete with gardeners of human flowers who perambulate his walks. Such blaze of silk and satin, such bonnets, such feathers, flowers (artificial, of course), and such ribbons—such finery of all kinds as is displayed on that little piece of ground on one single Sunday, would set your brains a wool-gathering as to how on earth Melbourne produced as many dress and bonnet-makers as could rig out this mart of fashion. I was particularly struck with the freshness and beauty of many of the charming belles who frequent the gardens, regular Baby Blakes in their way, contrasting strongly with the general sallow and somewhat acclimatized style of female beauty prevalent about Sydney. They are generally handsome, and fresh in colour; but then, if they should chance to open their lips, the delusion is at once

Digitized by Google

dispelled, and the dimpled cheeks and laughing eyes which but a moment before you had been ardently admiring, are transformed into the most unsophisticated lumps of barbarous ignorance that has ever been pitchforked into the world. "Oh ladies," said a friend the other day, "if you could but hold your tongues!"

Far different, however, are the scenes to be witnessed here sometimes; and amongst the many strange vicissitudes of fortune which I daily witness, none strikes me so painfully during my stay here, as the forlorn condition of the newly-arrived passengers from Europe. The convict is cared for, tended, fed, housed, clothed, and respectably treated in Van Diemen's Land upon his arrival. The free emigrant is more or less cared for; but the man—the man whose honest sense of independence, and whose manly pride, has withheld him from placing himself and his wife under any eleemosynary obligations from his country, is permitted in this overflowing, glutted, immoral, misgoverned, and debauched town, to perish in the ditch side; and happy for himself and his family if he get leave to do that in peace, and be not taxed for the luxury. In a country like this, with land illimitable, what think you of Government, and such an imbecile, spendthrift Government, charging 5*s*. per week per tent to such creatures, and appointing a staff of officers to collect this impost, the one-half of whose salaries the whole revenue from this source would not pay? Oh! it is monstrous. Labour, give us labour, shouted the people of Victoria. Thousands, tens of thousands of sturdy artizans and labourers are poured upon her shores weekly—her gold revenue produces nearly 900,000*l*. a year, independently of all other sources of income, and yet not a hovel, not a shed, not a free tent, has been appropriated for the use even for a night of those hardy adventurers, who have been wiled to her shores. Such a state of things will carry their own cure with them. Men will begin to speculate upon the expediency of retaining a government which does nothing but batten on the vitals of the public, whose every act either betokens gross carelessness, gross ignorance, or what is still worse, gross favouritsm, almost amounting to misappropriation of the public money. Men will ask, and the question must be answered, what has be-

Digitized by Google

come of the revenues of the colony? But, perhaps the best illustration I can give you is to point out the charges to which poor, confiding passengers are subjected to before landing here from the bay. These people take their passage at Liverpool or London on the faith that themselves and luggage will be delivered at Melbourne the same as at Sydney; but guess their astonishment when they find that they have 4s. each to pay for steam-boat fare up, and 30s. per ton for their luggage, and when they get on the wharf, there are other dues which, as the wharves belong to private individuals, are fixed at such rates as the owners please.

I may give you an instance of the utter destitution which some of these people are thrown into on their arrival here. When the *Lady Head* arrived here from Liverpool the weather was most inclement; wet pouring down in bucket-fulls, and the dirt, slop, and mud more than knee-deep, not only the thoroughfares, but in every spot where it was possible for human beings to set foot. In this state of affairs I saw more than four hundred poor people thrust upon our wharves, without food or shelter, but what their scanty bedding supplied. In this state of affairs Mr. Cole allowed the poor sufferers the use of the sheds on his wharf; but which, from the traffic upon them previously, were wet, damp, and muddy, to an inconceivable degree, under foot. Happening to be there in the early part of the night, I was informed, and subsequently ascertained for a fact, that a young woman, the wife of an intelligent Scotchman, gave birth to her first-born child. And, oh, such a plight! such a situation for an anguished mother to be in! Porters roaring, carters swearing, men, women, and children clamouring and screaming, and none, no not one, but the faithful husband and partner of that poor afflicted woman, to render either medical aid, or to minister the slightest consolation under the circumstances. It is melancholy to reflect on the increased amount of human suffering, which is patiently endured by new-comers here. I give you this as a sample; and further let me assure you, that no night passes but persons the most respectable are compelled to sleep out under such miserable coverings as they can get.

The public buildings of Melbourne are of a most inferior de-

Digitized by Google

scription, both in point of architectural style and internal accommodation. The only building of note at all adequate to its requirements is the Mechanics' Institution; and it has now to do the treble duty of concert hall, assembly room, and town hall, including offices, &c., for the town clerk. The library attached to the institution is very good indeed, and the rooms spacious and commodious, much better than your School of Arts. The Legislative Council sits now in St. Patrick's Hall, and that august body in its wisdom wishes to place an additional tax upon gold, without thinking of spending a few thousands upon the erection of Lentall's "talking shop," as the *Argus* would say, for themselves. With all their boast and braggadocio you may rely upon it Sydney has but little to fear from the legislative sagacity of this body. I was present during the debate which affirmed the principle of the Export Duty upon Gold Bill, and expected, you may be sure, to hear a brilliant debate, but in this I was disappointed. The initiation of the bill was entrusted to the honourable the Attorney-General, who, to my mind, is not just cut out for a Chancellor of the Exchequer. The debate was dull, prosy, and insipid in the extreme, having but one characteristic, namely, that honourable members managed with a truly Victorian facility to recant almost every one of their previously formed and expressed opinions, as readily as Sir Hudibras—

"Confute, change hands, and still confute."

And certainly it was marvellous to see how each could furnish reasons as sound as were that most analytical gentleman's for their tergiversation. A few honourable exceptions, however, were to be made, but in the bulk all were alike.

The state of society consequent upon the increase of our population, the moral and sanitary pestilence which pervades this place, together with a ramble or two in the country, must be left over till another letter. In the mean time I reiterate my advice to all new comers here, namely, let your purse be your friend, for depend upon it, if you rely upon any other you will but realize the fable of the farmer and his friends—the lark and her young ones.

Digitized by Google

DIARY OF A JOURNEY FROM MELBOURNE TO BENDIGO.

A day or two after the date of my last letter, the weather having apparently cleared up, we determined upon starting at once for the diggings. As there were several roads to them, some discussion took place as to which we should take, every one we inquired of giving us different accounts concerning them, some preferring one road, and some another. "Is not one road as good as another?" said one of the party. "Av coorse it is," said an Irishman, who was present, "Av coorse it is, and bet-ther." Influenced in some measure by this sagacious opinion, we resolved to leave it to chance, and to toss up in order to determine the route to be followed. "Man or woman?" "Woman;" then we followed "woman," which was nothing but what is usual and natural. Accordingly about 12 o'clock A.M., on the 8th September we started from the camp, just outside Melbourne, in which we had been for the last day or two. Having kept a journal, it is at your service, if you choose to make use of it.

Sept. 8th.—Left the camp, passed through Flemington, about three miles out of Melbourne; roads in a dreadful state. Hundreds going to and returning from the diggings. Met several of those who came down in the *Waratah* with us, who had been up at the diggings, and had returned already, having "ta'en a scunner" at it, as they say in Scotland. A most beautiful country, as green as emerald, hills richly sloping, and dotted with umbrageous trees. The country, from the appearance of the soil, and formation of the hills, appears to be admirably adapted for the cultivation of the vine. The mimosa, which is a much handsomer tree here than in New South Wales, being large and shady, appears scattered through the forest, and being now in full bloom, presents to the view a perfect mass of beautiful golden flowers. Travelled to-day only five miles, the roads being ankle-deep.

9th.—Our horses strayed away during the night, and we did not find them until mid-day. Just after starting it commenced

Digitized by Google

to rain slightly. Crossing Keila Plains the roads were awfully bad, and to add to our ills, the rain poured down in regular torrents. Had our horses not have been first-rate ones we must inevitably have stuck fast, as during the whole day they had heavy pulling, men on foot being unable to walk the road without sinking knee-deep. We had two horses in the cart, and had about 12 cwt. on it. Notwithstanding the plight in which we were, we could not but admire the scenery, which was beautifully varied—now broad, undulating meadows—now groves of she-oaks, eucalyptus, and mimosa; while the grass everywhere was green and soft as silk. Crossed the Broad Meadow, and came to the foot of the Gellibrand's Hill. Several drays were at the bottom of this, trying to get up, but it was with the greatest difficulty that they reached the summit, five or six bullocks falling down at a time through the slipperiness of the road. Ascended it without much difficulty, and encamped on the top of it. Travelled seven miles.

10*th*.—Roads worse than on either of the previous days, the ground being quite rotten and swampy. Country resembling parts of Liverpool Plains, timber principally box. In the evening a suspicious looking character came to the camp, having no boots or hat on, telling us that he had been robbed, and threatening vengeance on the thief. Our clothes-box being in the cart, C—— wanted to have it brought into the tent, as our fortune he said was in it. Upon which some wit in the camp replied, that it was a *ragged* one. The fellow, however, who appeared to be a shepherd for some one in the vicinity, after staying some time, and using some ferocious language in reference to his spoliator, departed quietly, but not before we had given him several hints that his room was more acceptable than his company. Eight miles.

11*th*.—When at breakfast this morning, a large brown snake came out of the log that was burning, and went into a pool of water close by. Those who doubt the fact of a snake's having legs might have been convinced of it by seeing this one, as the legs were distinctly visible after they had been swollen by the heat, and much resembled those of a caterpillar, only they were much larger. Roads very swampy. Kept along the Deep Creek for a

Digitized by Google

considerable part of the day, Mount Macedon being in sight on our left hand. Much of the scenery very picturesque, especially on the Deep Creek, the trees consisting of honeysuckle, cherry-tree, mimosa, eucalyptus, &c. There is a species of thorny mimosa growing here, which I have never seen in New South Wales, and the foliage of which is very pretty. Came to the Rocky Waterholes' Plain, where we met a bullock driver, who informed us that gold had been found within a few miles on a station belonging to Mr. Rigg. We determined upon inspecting the new gold-field, and leaving the others with the cart, three of us started in search of it. After going about half a mile, we came to Rigg's house, when we were directed to the diggings, about a quarter of a mile distant. When we got there, there were about a dozen men, two of whom only were at work; the rest having come, like ourselves, to see the place. The two men who had discovered the gold informed us that they had been working there about a fortnight—no one knowing it until the day before. They had sunk several holes on the top of a pretty high hill—the gullies as yet being too wet to allow of a hole to be sunk in them. From what we could learn from themselves, and from washing several tin-dishfuls of earth taken from the bottom of the holes which they had sunk, it did not appear to us that much could be done in that spot, although it seems very probable that a rich gold field will be discovered somewhere in the neighbourhood. About four feet below the surface there was a vein of quartz, which was extraordinarily rich in ore. Every stone we broke was dotted with minute specks of gold. One of the men showed us a piece that he had obtained from one of the holes, about the size of a pea. The soil through which they sunk was decomposed slate, resting on a bed of pipe-clay. The appearance of the country around is very picturesque particularly near the banks of the Deep Creek—gently sloping hills, dotted with umbrageous gum-trees, and covered with a thick sward of grass as green as emerald. Went back to our mates, intending to proceed about half a mile further before we pitched our tent. Crossing a flat, we were obliged to divide the load into two; but notwithstanding this, we got bogged, and were obliged to unload and take the horses out. Camped on Rigg's station.

Digitized by Google

Five miles. The mosquitoes very troublesome, which one would not expect at this time of the year.

12*th* (Sunday).—Stayed at encampment. Some went out to inspect the new diggings, and returned, bringing with them several pieces of quartz full of specks of gold. The majority, notwithstanding, determined on proceeding to Bendigo, in preference to stopping to give the place a trial. Four men encamped with us this night, who reported a fight about a claim at the diggings, in which two or three men were killed, and several wounded. They told us also that a nugget of pure gold, weighing upwards of 28 lbs., had been found at Eagle Hawk Gully, Bendigo. The Deep Creek, on which the new diggings are situated, runs eastward. If, therefore, gold in abundance be found there, it will be somewhat in contradiction to geological theories. The distance is twenty-five miles from Melbourne.

13*th*.—Very bad roads again. Country undulating and more thickly timbered; box and stringy-bark ranges. Get bogged, and take the horses out. Ascended Pretty Sally's, or the Big Hill. The soil excellent, and cultivation on the very top of the mountain. The road which we came and that to Sydney meet on the top of this hill. Magnificent view from the top of the hill—open plains, wood-crowned heights, shady valleys, and towering hills—"places which pale passion loves"—the view extending on one side to the sea coast, and the habitations of man alone being wanting to make the scenery perfect. Descended the hill and encamped at the foot of it. Twelve miles. A tall Highlander who was at a camp close by came down to converse with some of his countrymen who were with us, and afforded us much amusement. Many puns were perpetrated at his expense, all of which he took in good part. Some one asked him from what part of Scotland he came, he answered,—"From the Isle of Skye." "That's the reason you look so blue on it," said one. "That's why he's so lofty," said another. "That's a lofty thought," said a third. And many others which it would be tiring you to mention.

14*th*.—Passed through Kilmore; the land very rich; saw the wife of the man who had obtained the 28 lb. nugget at Ben-

Digitized by Google

digo. She informed us that her husband had sold it for 4*l.* per oz. About midday it commenced to rain very hard; roads indescribably bad; got bogged and unloaded, pulled the dray out, went a few yards and got bogged again; pulled the dray out again, and camped on the side of a ridge; the ground everywhere, both on the road and ranges, being perfectly rotten. Up nearly all night drying our bed, clothes, &c., which we had got wet through. Obliged every night to cut poles and boughs to put under us, the ground being a regular quagmire. The tinkling of the oxen's bells, which one hears at every encampment, gives somewhat of an oriental character to the scene. Six miles.

15*th.*—Crossed Donohoe's Creek; broke one of the traces in crossing, with fair pulling. If the horses had not been extraordinarily good they could never have kept on, in the state in which the roads were. Came to a creek in which were several drays stuck, one with nine horses, it being unable to cross. There is scarce a dray you meet on the road that is not accompanied by one or two women, oftentimes with families of children, all bound for or returning from the diggings. Got bogged in crossing the creek, unloaded, and then had great difficulty in getting over, as the horses had no footing, and sank up to the shoulder. The country very beautiful, compensating in part for the badness of the roads, which were the worst we had encountered. The hills and valleys were covered with flowers, daisies, white and yellow butter-cups, snowdrops, &c., while the mimosa bloomed along our path, adding fresh beauty to the scene, and fragrancy to the air. Each succeeding scene only impresses more forcibly on the mind the appropriateness of the title bestowed upon the country by Sir T. Mitchell, of "Australia the Happy." The country is well grassed and watered, the timber low and branching, without any underwood, and more beautiful and picturesque than any park. Just before encamping, got bogged the second time, the ground being very deceiving, the horses sinking to their middle in a place where you would least expect it. Encamped in a most beautiful and romantic valley, on the banks of a deep creek, with large waterholes—which some fanciful individuals of our party imagined

Digitized by Google

might be the retreats of the far-famed bunyip. Honeysuckle, mimosa, and eucalyptus, were the most common trees, and formed beautiful groves. Five miles.

16*th.*—Crossed two very bad creeks: met a great number of drays; crossed box hill and stringy bark ranges, the latter always dreary looking. Witnessed some beautiful scenery; hills rising over hills, covered with grass and shady tree: the valleys enamelled with flowers. Passed Morrison's station, a beautiful place. Ascended the Dividing Range. Granite in large masses begins to appear; quartz predominates in this to a very unusual extent, and this fact may probably throw some light on the richness of the Victoria gold-fields. The rocks are ofttimes of very peculiar forms, and in remarkable situations; large masses of tons weight, and quite round, lying on top of one another; the least effort being sufficient to remove them, and send them headlong down the mountain. The ranges are very low, and in fact the whole country is remarkably level: a circumstance which is contrary to one's preconceived notions of a gold-bearing region. The roads much better, and lined with diggers homeward and outward bound. The soil decomposed granite, which appears to be the only rock in the neighbourhood. The honeysuckle is met with here much farther from the coast than in Australia Proper, and grows in all sorts of soils and situations. Crossed Morrison's Creek, over which there is a bridge, the passage over which is rather unsafe, in consequence of the late heavy rains. Overtook two horse teams from Goulburn, which had been four months on the road, having been detained in crossing the river a week or a fortnight at a time. Splendid views from the axis of the mountain ranges; sheep and cattle feeding on the wood-crowned hills, and in the fertile valleys, and forming a charming and enticing picture of pastoral life. Encamped, having for beds the branches of the gum wattle, as soft and luxurious as a bed of down. Fourteen miles.

17*th.*—Crossed scrubby stringy bark ranges; got bogged, and were obliged to lay logs for twenty or thirty yards in order to get through; roads pretty good except in the gullies, which were desperately bad; fragmentary quartz, in great abundance, and strong indications of gold: got bogged the

Digitized by Google

second time near the M'Ivor Inn; most beautiful scenery, roads excellent, and as level as possible for the last three miles of this day's journey: encamped in the most delightful valley that the eye of man could behold. If I had the descriptive powers of Pope and the language of Milton, I would still fail in conveying to you an adequate description of a scene, which, to be justly appreciated, must be witnessed. Never before did the country seem so justly to merit the appellation of the "blest Australia"—never before did the mimosa seem to bear such lovely blossoms, or shed such fragrant odours—never before did the air seem so pure, clear, and inspiring as in that delicious valley. The herbage, soft, green, and luxuriant, formed an emerald sward, on which Titania herself might be proud to lead the elfin dance. Flowers of all hues, white, and purple, and crimson, and gold, and violet, in which those of a golden colour predominated, as if indicating the richness of the soil from which they sprung, enamelled the hills and valleys, grateful alike to the sight and smell. Buttercups, dandelions, eglantine, daisies, snowdrops, &c., completely covered the ground; the first mentioned, in particular, growing as richly as possible over acres, nay, miles of ground. The trees are principally mimosa and honeysuckle, and here and there some giant of the eucalyptus order grew in handsome clumps, some in full blossom, others without any, but not the less beautiful; while between them were green open spaces, on which the glorious sun poured down a flood of golden light. To complete the scene, the M'Ivor meandered through the valley, each winding turn disclosing "some fresher beauties varying round," and fed—

> Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice art
> In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
> Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
> Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
> The open field, and where the unpierced shade
> Imbrowned the noontide bowers: *thus was the place*
> *A happy rural seat of various view.*

"Dazzled and drunk with beauty," I sat down on a grassy knoll, feasting my eyes upon the enchanting landscape, until the god of day hid his beams behind the hills of the far west, and

Digitized by Google

the "chaste cold moon" rose in her virgin beauty over a scene, destined in some future day to be the retreat of lovers, and the theme of bards. Travelled to-day eleven miles.

18*th*.—Travelled along the course of the M'Ivor for eleven miles. The scenery equal, if not superior, to that of yesterday, each succeeding scene appearing to the enraptured eye more beautiful than the last. Even those who are usually unmindful of natural beauties, were unable to gaze on the landscape without giving vent to passionate exclamations of admiration. English, Irish, and Scotch, all concurred in agreeing that they had never before seen anything so beautiful, and that the dwellings of man alone were wanting to make the scenery the most delightful that the imagination could conceive. To add to our pleasure, the roads were excellent, and as level as a bowling-green. We passed over "flowery plains," with picturesque sloping heights on our right hand, through "groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm," the sky brightly blue and cloudless, and the air wafting "Sabean odours." The formation of the country is principally schistose, with an abundance of fragmentary quartz. Crossed the M'Ivor, and came on to box flats, in which swamp oaks appeared for the first time. Scrubby ranges, box, and stringy-bark, coarse grass and herbs like those at the Turon; country more level than at the Turon. From the geological structure and general appearance, I should imagine that gold would be found somewhere in the neighbourhood, in abundance. Roads very bad again. Crossed a box flat entirely consisting of hillocks having the appearance of waves, and very uniform in their size. It seems as if the land had been thrown up in a fused and slightly agitated mass, and then suddenly cooled. Came to the Campaspie River, and had a fresh view of the celebrated Mount Alexander; romantic scenery, great abundance of trap rock. When we got here, we were told that we could not cross, as the river was up. About forty drays were encamped on the banks, waiting the first opportunity to pass over; we accordingly pitched our tent on the bank of the river, intending to cross over on Monday morning, the stream being then considerably swollen and running rapidly. To-day eighteen miles.

Digitized by Google

19*th* (Sunday).—Remained in camp. An immense number of people, on foot and on horseback, crossed the Campaspie to-day, on their way to and from the diggings. The river fell considerably during the day and previous night. About sunset the sky became overcast with heavy clouds, threatening immediate rain, and therefore we thought it advisable to cross the river at once, as it was probable we should be detained on its banks a week or two, if it should happen to rain. Packed up according, and started to cross over, one of the party riding the leading horse. When about half way over, the leader laid down, which circumstance was nearly causing an unlucky termination to our passage; fortunately, however, she rose again, and we crossed without further trouble, although the water was above the bed of the cart, and running with a strong current. It was lucky for us that we did cross, as it rained hard during the night.

20*th*.—Raining hard during the forenoon, but fine in the afternoon. Passed over box and gum forests, scrubby in places, and thinly-timbered well-grassed flats. The country in general, so far as this, was as fine as could be wished for. The grass every where soft, silky, and as green as a field of young wheat. Unlike that of New South Wales, the grass and pasture here consists of nutritious herbs and very fine grass, growing in a thick sward, and completely hiding the soil. Hills and vales alike were covered with flowers, principally of a yellow colour, and growing as thick as they could, presented to the eye of one accustomed to the almost flowerless fields of Australia, an unusual and beautiful appearance, realizing in some respects the description given of English meadows. Everywhere, too, the mimosa, loveliest of the flowering trees of Australia, and destined to be as much celebrated in the lays of her poets, as the hawthorn has been in those of the British bards, scented the air with its perfume, and dazzled the eye with its rich yellow blossoms. Passed over some barren ranges covered with quartz, the only thing pleasant on them being some flowering shrubs, chiefly of the mimosa species. Through some fertile flats, the roads very level and good, as indeed they were during the greater part of the day; the only fault in them being a bog

Digitized by Google

here and there, which, after our previous bad roads, we considered a mere nothing. Met several men who were returning from the diggings, and from whom we learned that robberies and murders had of late been very frequent at Bendigo. On Wednesday last near thirty drays were stopped by a large gang of bushrangers in the Black Forest, and rum, tobacco, and other property taken from them to a great amount. One man lost upwards of 700*l.* worth of gold. No less than three murders have been committed during the last week at Bendigo, one in Eagle Hawk, another at Peg Leg Gully, and another in the Long Gully. One of the murdered men, we are informed, had his head completely severed from the body. Our informants told us that they had heard cries of "murder" from the tent in which one of the unfortunate men was killed, but hearing some one (probably one of the perpetrators of the crime) laugh at the same time, they thought that the men were joking among themselves. The police are out scouring the bush in all directions. We thanked our stars that we had not gone by the road through the Black Forest as we had at first intended, since, being indifferently armed, how much soever we might have wished to display our heroism, we should have had but little chance of doing so. Crossed Emu Creek; the country of slate formation, quartz in abundance. An immense number of people passing to and from the diggings; men, women, and children, along the whole road from this to Bendigo. Came to Bullock Creek, where we saw the places that the diggers had made for cradling during the dry weather, when the washing stuff had to be carried here from Bendigo, a distance of seven or eight miles. Four seizures of sly grog-sellers' carts, &c., were made here by the commissioner and police this morning. Passed over barren ridges, the timber on which consisted of iron-bark, box, gum, and stringy-bark; this was the first time that I had seen iron-bark in Victoria; quartz in great abundance, every ridge being covered with them. The country, in its geological structure and general appearance, very much resembles that on the Long Creek in the Western Diggings; the ridges are unusually uniform in their size, lower than one would be inclined to imagine in a gold region, and have all the same direction. The

Digitized by Google

strike of the strata is north by west and south by east, schist formation well developed, and quartz in unusual abundan The whole, or nearly the whole of the country over which passed to-day, has every appearance of being a rich gold-fi but it has not yet had a fair trial. About 3 P.M. came in sigh the commencement of the Bendigo diggings, or what is cal the Back Creek; but as Bendigo deserves a more lengthen description than I can give you at present, I shall not atter it in this letter. Pitched our tent on the Back Creek. Travel to-day a distance of sixteen miles. Thus making the wh distance to Bendigo 107 miles, which I think is correct, though less than what we were informed it was.

We, however, travelled upwards of 140 miles, having make so many detours in order to avoid bad places in t roads.

London : Printed by STEWART and MURRAY, Old Bailey.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

form 410

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google